*"Where there is no vision the people perish"*

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# THE POETRY REVIEW

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# THE POETRY REVIEW

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# BACK TO THE LAND: A LITTLE WILL AND TESTAMENT*

WHEN I am dead and out of my shell
And my life is on nimbler wing
Bury me high in the hill country
Where the moorland waters sing ;
Lay my spent limbs near a trout river,
A stream that swirls from the fells ;
I would hear the chimes of the rushing brooks,
And the song of the nodding heath bells.

If you should bury me in a churchyard
Near houses of ugly array,
Bone by bone with the street-bitten men
Who have harried Earth's Wonder away,
If you should bury me in the churchyard
Of a tarred and trafficking town
I may push through the clay that covers me
And topple the tombstones down.

But dig my grave near a moorland stream
'Mid the high solacing hills,
Where the founts of Life spill ceaselessly
Their glittering, swelling rills ;
Put a firm rock where lies my head
And a bunch of ling at my feet,—
Miles afar from the living dead
And the tracks that the money-soles beat.

Yet this may not be, for from wish to deed
There is often no reaching span.
Small blame on the just if dust quarrel with dust;
Only listen ! and serve as you can :—
Nail no prisoning coffin about my limbs
That were made to be blent with the dark,
For I may ride on the nape of the wind
And shine in the rainbow's arc.

* This Will, written as a ballad-poem or long lyric in sprung-rhythm, may be partially familiar to just a few readers. It is one that has been considerably revised and enlarged from a poem that originally appeared in *The Nation*, after that in my book *The Unknown Warrior* (1924) and after that in *Collected Poems*, 1918–31 (formerly published by Messrs. Benn and now by Dent and Sons). This, I think, will be its final form.

And then take my clothes and my fishing gear,—
  All the things that a man may use—
My books and papers and manuscripts,
  News of me, and of other men news,
And sort them and save them and sell them,
  The hoard of moods foolish and wise;
But give unto some who will prize them,
  With blessings on hands and eyes.

Oh, I've lost in shadow the battle of Life!
  But the struggle with Death I can win.
(Such profits as follow must go to my wife,
  And after, my next of kin.)
Too few are the eyes that read me at times,
  And men say I've been choked by the Age;
But Time has a way with the nettles and bines
  For freeing the stifled page.

Strange clutch of the Night! for I sang for the Age,
  And of it, and round it, and in.
But the blood ran too lifeless and chill in its veins,
  And its smile seemed a skeleton's grin.
Therefore think not of me as under Death's feet
  Or hurt by corruption's breath,
For wherever I be—in earth, air, sky, or sea—
  Thank God, I'll have done with Death!

So let not the mourners bring Death's hue
  To darken the upland tracks,
But let them be dressed in purple and blue
  And go not with night on their backs;
Grey, if they will, for the rocks of the hill,
  Or brown, for the glove of toil,
Or white for the clouds and the fleece of the rill,
  Or green for the springing soil.

And sing no song with a downcast air,
  Though I've sung such songs in my day,
But tell of the Spring, and a green glade where
  All frustration is withered away.

O, chant no lines with a dead-march air,
And make not the spirit to weep,
But sing of the birds and the cragland herds
And the stars' way, shining deep!

HERBERT PALMER.

## DEMENTIA

HE sleeps so calm and peaceful, who can tell
In what mid world of vaporous delight
His poor diseaséd mind, now free from hell,
Dwells happily behind locked doors to-night?
A soft and yearning sigh escapes his lips:
(Tread lightly you who pass his canvas bed)
At night it seems vaingloriously he slips
The iron bands from off his bruiséd head.
Alas, too soon, wild fantasies, and fear
Of being by the Devil's hosts pursued,
His realm of daylight consciousness will sear:
(Tread lightly ere you rouse his ugly mood)
Asleep, he dwells beyond deep darkness way—
Awake, amid a stranger sunlight, chilled and grey.

F. T. BRATTON.

## RESOLUTION

I SAW the trees naked,
Essential character, bare of flickering leaf;
I saw the frozen flames of the beech tree
And reinforced articulation of the oak.

I saw my love naked,
Her spirit's beauty graving the subtle flesh;
I saw the long tenderness of her thighs
And the splendid generosity of hands and breast.

I saw England naked,
Clean of newspaper colouring and politican badge;
Her feet were planted in a grove of homes,
Her pale face blazed beneath unclouded stars.

M. NEWTON.

*Two Poems by T. Weston Ramsey :*

## DECEMBER

FROST is the quietest thing that grows
All in a night it comes to leaf
And flower more perfect than the rose
—So firm its stem and yet so brief.
Its seed is quite invisible
Its passing smells not of decay
When in the light its mutable
Thin petals quietly pass away.

They leave no trace but the brown stain
To show where they had sustenance,
They shed no faded whispering train
Of dead leaves in the wind to dance.
Are they compounded only of light
And dying mingle with their source ?
Snow in its birth is even as white
But dies with tears and slow remorse,

Less crystal than these fragile spires
Fading like insubstantial ghost
Into the sun's new-kindled fires
That fuse their gold with silver frost.

## POWER STATION

SOUTH of the Thames by Chelsea reach,
Anchored by taut wires
Stands the square yellow brick
Cathedral of three spires.

Never were spires less pointed,
No weathercocks gild
Their summit but long black pennons
Curled by the wind and frilled

At the edges flap their long wings
All the length of the nave ;
Stark blind the walls stand,
Pillar and architrave

Are not to be seen but only
A smooth blank wall.
What service is held what orisons prayed
In this cathedral ?

What hymns before the altar
Are sung by the worshippers ?
The altar is black and smooth and cold,
Polished like Lucifer's.

The worshippers bow and are silent
Except for the sullen hum
That seems to rise from under the earth
Like speech from out of the dumb.

Yet on the altar power broods
Power to rise and to run,
Power to take the wings of the air
And challenge the fire of the sun.

Power to make the minds of men
Forget the greater will
That over wire and black pennons
Broods and is more still

And more awful in might even
Than that altar of stone
Before which bowed steel ministrants
Drone their monotone ;

Power that fettled the gamecock's spur
And polished copper wire,
That made the water lithe to run
And burnt the brick in fire.

Must this cathedral fall down
That a loftier one may rise,
And flaunt a gilded weathercock
Once more to clearer skies ?

It may be—but surely in men
The heart must be made anew
To separate dark from light and sift
False gods from true.

Before this sifting be fully learned
And the heart made again
Many great buildings must fall and man
Carry his hod of pain

Years longer, years through,
Years of flood and fire
To a pinnacle higher than these towers,
To the cross that crowns the spire.

August 1941. T. W. RAMSEY.

## AVIATOR PACIS

*(being the lament of a keen peacetime pilot, relegated in war to instructing)*

WHEN the thunder of the war has died away,
And the dogs of war are swallowed by the sea;
When the blood of England's dead has won the day,
And I am left, what will they think of me?

What shall I say, who, from the early days,
Knew wings before I knew of work or love,
And trod the sky's immeasurable ways,
All Earth below, and Heaven's alone above? . . .

What shall I say, when those gay trusting eyes,
That once shone into mine with Devon's sun,
Are raised again to search the clearing skies,
Once mine, where other men than I have won?

When the sky calls, and mountains spread beneath
Their long-cast shadows, I must fly alone;
But taste no more the sweetness of its breath,
For I have lost what I believed my own.

F.-Lt., R.A.F., S. Rhodesia. R.L.P.

# TRIBUTE TO HEROES

THEY are named and they are nameless. There are names which never
Will pass from men's keeping, I could speak of them in hundreds,
And of thousands whose names will never be known, but whose essence
As a rare perfume pervades time's corridors for ever.

They were the stalwart-souled, the strong-hearted; men who cherished
Something more precious than life—their inmost integrity,
Their faith, a fine honour, that which they held to be truth—
To these they held fast, and rather than yield them they perished.

By axe, on the wheel, by cruel fire; even feet in the flame
Cried praise to their God, conceding no recantation.
Or, bodies steeled to endure, writhed under torture, praying
That death would seal close their lips before they betrayed a name.

Such were they. And their spirit lives still, when daily men say
(Comrades endangered, entombed) Here is my life. Take it.
Face poisoning fumes, scalding steam, the rent flesh. proving there is
Still some of that indomitable stuff wrapped in this clay.

Which shall be as the sons of God, the immortal ones,
For their courage can face undaunted the abysmal spaces,
Unfearingly tread the mysterious paths of the stars, and view
With imperturbability the setting of strange suns.
Spirits so strong to endure can conquer this mortal death.
Outsoaring young eagles in speed they storm the high places,
Pass on swift intrepid feet into the divine presence
To receive new breath from One who is the Imperishable Breath.

IDA MARGARET MILLS.

## WHO FORGETS

WHO forgets when the columbine
Has just begun
Its delicate rise and fall
To the cottage sun,
Delicate mauve and white.
Who can forget it
Not I for one.

Who forgets when the glory
Of steep falling sun
Deep tracks wet glitter
Where shadows run,
Gold black apocalypse.
Who can forget it
Not I for one.

Soft as the petal,
Strong as the sun,
You grow to me,
Glow on me
For now and all memory
My only one.

E. W. EDMONDS.

## AS THE MIST SWIRLS

AS the mist swirls
And wreathes to nothingness
In the sweet air
Of the sea-washed hills,
So may my soul.

As the snow melts
And flows to meet
The mother of waters,
So may my soul.

As the stars hush
When night is passed,
So may my soul.
As a child sleeps,
So may my soul.

P. E. LEAVER.

# A POET AND WAR

## III

DURING the past twenty-five years, amidst all the experiment and innovation, there were great advances in technique, new fields opened for the poet to traverse. That is our benefit, our loss is the loss of all generations to come, for where is the poetry to pass on, to be remembered by? Only the tears and the bitter disillusionment of "The Hollow Men," the sugar-sweet songs of the early Yeats, and the twisted greatness of his eventual development. Yeats we need not hand on: he passes on and takes to immortality as Auden to New York. But we look in vain for poets who will reflect our age, recall us to those who come after.

The reason lies, I think, in the psychological condition of that unnatural period between wars. People were uncertain, hopeless, anxious, frustrated. And the poets reflected their hopelessness, their frustation.

But whoever heard of our great poets writing of their weak submissiveness, shamefaced subversiveness, sulky defiance? Their poems were ships that sailed beyond all seas. By tradition, English poetry is the poetry of strength. The poetry of the last generation has been that of weakness. Poets must be men who can write with strength and courage and greatness. Sorrow is strong, passion is unconquerable. Not so lust and self-pity.

To-day the poet returns to his old battlefield. He does not cringe, he does not offer urchin defiance. David Gascoyne suddenly burst forth from his sterile aestheticism to a new virile poetry; even Spender advances when one might have thought he had despaired of progress. In the words of Alan Rook:

> As the northern winter descends on these fields of Europe,
> As the northern winds lend steel to the lonely hour,
> As the storm-bound ships make head for dangerous harbours,
> All these, the latent ardour
> And fears, all that ever this
> Generation dimly loved rises to meet this hour.

Here is a new spirit, a strong spirit, that we saw glimmerings of in Auden at his best, in Day Lewis sometimes,

and at other rare moments when the poet defeated his age. Perhaps these lines, too, are only a glimmering, but they are the promise of much more to come. Not the hurried glimpse of something we may not gaze upon. Alan Rook is a fine poet, and he has already shown us enough, since the war burst upon him, to give us hopes for his future works, that I think we shall see justified.

A younger poet whose almost strictly traditional technique is more severe, and very much narrower than Rook's, but whose first slim volume contains some poems of real beauty, is Clive Sansom. The almost Georgian lyricism of:

> Where the moorland ends and the oakwood glooms,
> Three poplars rise like witches' brooms,
> Curved by the wind in a clouding sky,
> They menace the moon as it surges by . . . .

is countered by his stark admission of reality. Beauty on the shelf, alone, may merely please and enthral, beauty " In the Midst of Death " brings sadness as well as joy. That, incidentally, is the title of his book. He does not try to escape from horror or from reality ; that is why he merits our attention :

> He has not died, this Christ, he has not died,
> Whose blood a million churches sanctify,
> While pain and darkness live he cannot die,
> Above the world he still hangs crucified.

## IV

Different again, and yet in the new spirit, is Paul Scott, who has just brought out a long poetic trilogy, " I, Gerontius." This poem reflects the thoughts and emotions of the author when he entered the army. In many ways, the poem is in the Eliot tradition, and yet it points to the new in poetry, the more effectively for all that. For this is neither the weary, disillusioned poet of " The Hollow Man," nor the smugly ageing Eliot of " Dry Salvages " ; this is a sensitive, suffering, courageous soul in Eliot's rags, and though the technique may be less sure, as obviously it must be, there is in it a new germ of life that could never come from an Imagist, nor from a Surrealist, nor from a Modernist of the twenties and thirties :

> How deep are thy waters Ladoga,
> How still ? The snows of Narvik

Are broken with great voices.
Pharaoh! Thy tomb is Namsos.

and then again:

Dream on, Gerontius! Dream
And dreaming you will dream no more.
Such as I Gerontius know not you,
Nor knowing you will pass you in the street.

But the quality of this poem cannot be given in contexts. This is as it should be. All the same, it is a work which gives a new dimension to the oft-sought significance in poetry.

V

Others do not go in shoals. Though some of the larger fish (Nicholas Moore, Henry Treece and their less important disciples are a case in point) still prefer to travel in groups. But, once again, there seems to be room for the individual poet.

Patrick Byrne brings Celtic lyricism to us. Comes to us, speaks our language, only to lead us to the misty isles:

White May in our moonlit trysting-place
Where the quiet dead lie long;
Drift of your hair across my face;
In my heart an old, mad song.

Kevin MacCarthy reflects, also, some of this Celtic wildness. Michael Savage is too like Siegfried Sassoon to be quoted, but has a melodious virility for all that.

Douglas Gibson sings simple songs that are barely aesthetic enough even for the 1914 Georgians, but has written some fine poetry for all that. Alex Comfort writes with a faultless technique, and will obviously write something really fine when he becomes less ashamed of his passions and more ready to admit sensuousness to his poetry. Emmanuel Litvinoff arrests the attention, and glitters in every line. Here is passion, here is suffering, here is their singer, too. Yes, of all these individual poets, after Alan Rook, I will turn back most often to Litvinoff. His is the bitterness of the strong man whose courage makes him go on. That is the very seeds of poetry. As life taught it to de Vigny, so it took a war to teach it to our poets.

Out of the strong came forth sweetness.

PETER BAKER.

[The previous article in this series appeared in the September–October 1941 issue. Peter Baker is the promoter of the significant Resurgam broadsheets.]

# T. S. ELIOT AND THE LAY-READER (II)

WEST of *Burnt Norton* I am placing *East Coker* and *The Dry Salvages* and eastward all the earlier works. I put *Burnt Norton* as the junction, because it was in this poem, if you remember, that Mr. Eliot seems to have definitely established the art of duality within himself. He is no longer dependent on stage properties, the off-sets of choruses, an assumed listener or a Watson. He is working within a complete conception of constancy; and we are told by our scientists that the only thing which is constant is change.

That Eliot follows this law is clearly shown in *East Coker*:

> Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
> Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
> Is an open field or a factory or a by-pass.

Further on in the same poem:

> Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
> The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
> Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
> Isolated, with no before and after,
> But a life-time burning in every moment
> And not the life-line of one man only
> But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.

In this suggested thought we do not find a poet suddenly rearing a Dutch barn on four gaunt posts as a vaunted challenge to God's changing skies! We find instead a workman with careful hands and brain who has learned to weigh the values of a beautiful earth and thoughtfully to place its stones in a form that some future shall recognize as the dawning of a ciphered plan.

The human race, with all its toxic vanities and noisy effects turned blindly from any form of constructive living, must perform the miracle of passing through the eye of a needle if it is ever to survive from its own thoughtless self-destruction. In this respect perhaps some of the world's great philosophers and poets may provide the real solution, for they tend always towards simplicity of living, since the superfluous is the unconscious voice of wasted energy which is required for learning.

And right action is freedom
From past and future also.
For most of us, this is the aim
Never here to be realized;
Who are only undefeated
Because we have gone on trying;
We, content at the last
If our temporal reversion nourish
(Not too far from the yew-tree)
The life of significant soil.

The first of these articles was concentrated on Mr. Eliot's deep-rooted awareness of balance. It was important to establish this emphasis, as it applies directly to his style. As his thought balances so do his sentences, not in the sense of Pope's rhymed couplets, with the caesura so clearly marked that a line could be drawn down the middle, but in musical phrases which are the complement of each other.

Free verse is very far from being the scattered, inconsequent structure which is put upon it through its misleading title. I have read many clever poems expressing excellent and beautiful thoughts but the effect produced by the total misinterpretation of the term free has not been unlike playing a line of Bach, another of Chopin, followed hot by Debussy and so on. The result, alas, is a characterless hotch-potch which the merited subject is unable to save from extinction.

Let us pull on the surgeon's rubber gloves and select from his glittering trays our scalpel and trephine and have our patient "Etherized upon a table!" No. 3 in the Rock Choruses shows many examples of the balanced sentence and word order as used by Eliot, because the work of choral poetry has to be simple in purpose and therefore cruder in form than the developed design given to a poem read by a single voice. In being a little unfair to Pope I must also add some unfairness to Eliot in order to underline the evidence of balanced sentences. Many phrases begin the same way and therefore cut a deep channel from which attention cannot escape,—

I have given you hands—
I have given you speech—
I have given you my Law—
I have given you lips—
I have given you hearts—

I have given you power of choice—

The cumulative effect of this cardinal thinking provokes a demand for the culmination of each upward thrust.

When studying Eliot those people who know America fairly well will realize that it becomes increasingly urgent to read him as an American and not an English poet. In any nation it is always the thought behind the thought that is racial. The appeals of all nations have been centralized in recent years in America, and as an immediate result of this its people have developed a quadrilateral way of thinking, from which they extract what they hope will be the kernel. By doing this they avoid excessive emotions of either hate or admiration and also that depressing ancestral ghost which binds a race to do what its grandfathers did, whether what they did is suitable to present situations or not. It is also wisdom to remember that the American is never a hustler, except in non-essentials. Over vital decisions he takes time to be correct before starting out—

There will be time to murder and create
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate.

This was never an Englishman's thought, or a Frenchman's

Briques et tuiles
O les charmants
Petits asiles
Pours les amants ! (*Verlaine*)

Eliot's American descent (from Andrew Eliot of East Coker, Somerset, who settled in Massachusetts, in the early sevententh century) has had its influence on the action of his style. We do not find the orthodox stress of metre, regardless of vowel length, or a standard pattern faithfully performed from the initial stanza. We find instead musical chords, panoramic music, tidal music. We see the " Minute Man of new England " with his alert awareness of the freedom for which he fought, reiterated in the instinct for poetic freedom for which Eliot also fought. It is this difference behind the meaning of the same language which makes it necessary when reading this poet, to read him in American and not English. So to return to Eliot's traditional music with a different understanding—I quote

from a poem, *Marina* which to my mind he has never surpassed in beauty :

What seas, what shores, what grey rocks and what islands
What water lapping the bow
And scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through the fog.
What images return
O my daughter.

It is impossible to read this without the swell of the ocean's tide, its receding and again its rise and fall.

What is the face, less clear and clearer
The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger
Given or lent more distant than stars and nearer than the eye
Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet
Under sleep where all the waters meet.

These last two lines hold the receding wave, threading back through the pebbles which are the leaves of the shore. Listen to its muted music, withdrawing to the matrix, the source of its Being.

At the risk of incurring the censorious epithet "eulogy" which is particularly active in this present period, when no one must be appreciated, no one must *try* to do anything, and no one must *want* to do anything, it would be right to stress the sheer beauty that lies in the simplicity of word order, building this poem. First consider its word economy in relation to the purport of the subject, then the direct application, also its liquid alliteration and internal rhyming, creating an undertow of rhythm, which with the balanced sentences presents one of the most beautiful counterpoints Eliot has ever written.

These then are the main guides in reading this poet's work. The other devices of symbol, imagery, paradox, follow in *The Waste Land*. Lastly Eliot's imagination is his own. I can dissect the component parts of his method and show you how it works, but the inspiration that gives movement and life to the vibrant words is thankfully as far beyond the surgeon's knife as the beat of the heart.

The desert is not remote in southern tropics,
The desert is not only round the corner,
The desert is squeezed in the tube-train next to you
The desert is in the heart of your brother.

Aladdin's lamp achieved no greater demand than the task performed in those four lines of inward vision.

E. M. STEPHENSON.

## A SLUM PRIEST IN WAR

IT is as he would have it ;
He who will give away his life shall save it,—
the little life that lies
mastered, beaten and crushed,
dead to the world and with its glories hushed,
but living in men's eyes.

He dreams not of the sheep
that in the full-fed noon of evening creep
over the quiet fells,
or of the nightingale
singing ever over the darkening vale,
or of far bells,
or of a glorious name,
or of biography the child of fame
or of light eventide.
or when the full life ends
the little circle of steel grappled friends
that beyond others abide.

He dreams of mastering ills,
he dreams of houses lovely as the hills,
peace-roofed and wisdom-stored,
the fervency men reap
from the still bedroom of abundant sleep,
the passing of the sword.

He cries not in the streets ;
plays not the oracle, performs no feats
time's chronicle reveals,
but bound with men unknown
gropes siren called among worlds debris-strewn,
as one who loves and feels.

Happily has he tasted
the wine of life that other men have wasted
and therefore others aver
he is, for his self-giving
scholar and patron of the art of living,
Joy Connoisseur ! I. SUTHERLAND GROOM.

## ESCAPE FROM TIME

LAST night my brother came to me
In Schubert's String Quartet in D . . .

I sat beside the radio
In a strange room he did not know,
With people whom he never saw,
Because he died, long years ago.
They killed him in the last Great War,
When he was only twenty-four.

That was in nineteen-seventeen. . . .
But now my inward eyes have seen
The truth about the years between.
There are no years! What has been, is,
And what in me was always his,
Is his to-day, and evermore;
There is no "after" nor "before."

Listen! The music, fresh and free,
Goes lilting down the summer breeze,
From two young people, knee to knee,
Set squarely to the piano-keys,
Playing duets—(as, long ago,
We used to, when the radio
Lay yet within the womb of Time),
A poor performance, and a crime
To purists—But what fun we had!
What matter if our time was bad?

We never doubted life was good,
Those sunlit mornings of Long Vac . . . .
Thrice blessed Schubert! Bring me back
That smell of apples and old wood,
The garden door which open stood
On to a lawn where pigeons cooed
Soft undertones to our duet!
Can I forget? Can I forget? . . . .

Forget? Remember? What are these?
Words without meaning. Know the truth!

Reach out and take again your youth,
Re-live it when and where you please!
There is a world inviolate,
Where Time can tell no man to wait
While he unloads his bitter freight
Of loss and sorrow, lies and hate.

Slip through the prison doors, and dwell
Where youth and laughter hold their spell.
Music shall yield a master-key—
Brother and sister, enter free!
For neither "then" nor "now" can be
In Schubert's String Quartet in D!

MARGARET GREGSON.

## COME LET US DREAM

BE done with the fray and let us dream.
In the dim half light of the mind we shall sail
Secure; for against memory's showy stream
No drought can prevail.

Here is a region
Where friends are legion,
Creed or station
Mar no relation,
And hate is outgrown
For all is known.
Where joys and fears
Are free from tears,
For cooled of their heat
Old passions seem sweet.
Here is pleasure
To take at our leisure,
Loved scenes are repeated
And time is defeated.

Oh come, let us dream,
Sail on the shadowy stream
Where no drought can prevail.

JOAN EASTMAN.

## MAN OVERBOARD

FULL *fathom five* . . . .
But deeper, deeper far
He drifted, who had ceased at last to strive
—Throbbing with anguish to remain alive,
With memory's unhealed scar
And all the agony of things that are—
Surrendering the torture of drawn breath
Slid downward in a quiet dream of death.
. . *But doth suffer a sea change*
*Into something rich and strange* . . . .
Pillowed on rippled sand he lies
In the dim splendour of a deep-sea glade ;
Drifts over him a shade—
Translucent jellyfish with jewelled eyes,
All ocean for their range.
About his head the seaweeds sway like trees ;
Glowing anemones
Outspread their daisy tentacles ; and grave
Stone lilies rear their cups against the wave;
Delicate Venus' flower baskets grow
Rock-rooted, row on row.
There is no sound of footfall on the ooze
That never took the print of mortal shoes,
But overhead the shining fishes pass
Like birds that fly above a roof of glass.
The sea-firs from their branchy homes send out
Their little living seed,
And microscopic polypes spread about
Their tiny cilia to breathe and feed,
Which is their only need ;
But he knows naught of them, being laid so deep
Relaxed in timeless sleep.

*Sea nymphs hourly ring his knell* . . . .
High in some overflown cathedral tower
Rings the slow passing bell
Hour by quiet hour
While the unhurrying currents onward flow.

And he will never know
Who mourns him in the world above the swell,
Seeing the subaquarian sweet sound
Of that chime wraps him round
Whose deep tone hushes him ; nor saltest tear
Will ever reach him here,
Where the sea-wrack enshrouds him limb by limb,
And corals coffin him.

D. E. C. Tomlin.

## JOY

I AM full of joy to-night—
Joy talking to itself,
Joy tumbling over itself,
Like a child in an hour of Make-Believe,
Like a puppy chasing its own tail—
Joy inconsequent, inextinguishable and inexplicable—
Inconsequent—as a leaf tap-dancing on an October road,
Inextinguishable—as sunlight on the forehead of Summer,
And inexplicable—as the life-impulse that gives it birth.

Yet the air is full of sorrow—
Sorrow at war with itself,
Sorrow surpassing itself,
Like a man in the hour of disillusion,
Like a dog howling at the unseen—
Sorrow insidious, inescapable and inexhaustible—
Insidious—as the December leaf on which all Progress skids,
Inescapable—as frost on the beard of Winter,
And inexhaustible—as the death-instinct that conceived it—

For the whole world is at war—
Killing, maiming and making miserable.
Am I utterly selfish,
Am I merely foolish,
Am I criminally careless ?
Or, is it just that a bird is singing so loudly
That I cannot hear my thoughts ?

Roberta Shuttleworth.

*Four Poems by Marguerite Edgelow :*

## "RED SKY AT MORNING"

(*For all the women whose men are serving in Africa.*)

SOFTLY the moon is shining
on me, as there it shines
across the tented silence,
the far rock-torn declines.

The sea that has no pulses
frets on the wind-curled sand ;
my thoughts are feathers falling
across your sleeping hand.

The mallard in the marshes
stirring the reedy sedge
are watchful for the thrusting
of a new day's molten wedge,
and I, alone and quiet,
shall watch the sky from bed
with the tearless eyes of women
who see the day dawn red.

## A YOUNG FARM LABOURER GOES TO WAR

THEY have taken him away, have given
the spurting loins of guns for tool ;
for the green fields and quiet
a gay pretence—thin veneer hiding
the metal mask of death.
He gave himself for cleansing
to the cool fall of stream, where leaves lie lightly
parting the day reflected, with limbs bare as winter.
Now he is soiled with struggle,
his hands are cold, and falling
across blood-rotted grass, and wire.
So too was Christ torn on metal
by order of an imperialist soldier.

## KATUSHA SPEAKS

*She looks across to the Volga, flowing broad and slow beyond the scarred plain. The tide of battle has recently passed; fires are still burning. Her heavy-lidded face is pale and inscrutable.*

ON burning ground the piled and ruined metal
warps and grows molten under mounting pressure,
mingles with bitter breath of wood, dissolving
twin ghosts to ash.

For you are gone, and fallen is the forest;
none may return along that road, none wander
acrosss the pitted earth—earth whose last water
was human blood.

I do not know the way you went, Ilyana,
but that the end is great, needful to Russia
I know. You will return in the free cornlands
to our children.

## SONG OF THE CREEK SPARROW

STILLNESS of green and gold
silver of mud in sun,
spilt lilac, where the trails
of the ground ivy run.

The grey out moded reeds
peer through the iris blades
whose gold will follow on
before the kingcup fades.

Here, that great unseen light
is burning flower clear
as God breathes life again
into the broken year.

Aylesford. MARGUERITE EDGELOW.

Mr. Henry Ainley will give a Reading of "Enoch Arden" on May 1st, Mr. Charles Tennyson presiding.

*Four War-time Poems by T. E. Casson:*

## GRATA QUIES PATRIAE

BELOVED fatherland, the sun
Rests gently on the meads no Hun
E'er blacken'd since the dark of Time;
And, voyaging through clouds sublime,
He pours on thorpe and spire and stream
The peace of an unaging dream.

Grateful is quiet, saith the sire
Of Latin speech, whose lips inspire
To love of silence and of home:
So may no eagles of harsh Rome
Bark round this sea-girt rock that bears
God's image and sweet halcyon airs!

## ELEGY ON AN AIRMAN

THIS barren spot by Kirkby Moor
Is sacred to the dead,
A British airman; and the poor
Soil with his blood is fed.

From morn to night, and to and fro,
His hawk-like wings he beat,
Watching his prey in dens below,
Among the cloud and peat.

But when the mist had wrapp'd the hill
And hid the fells from sight,
He crash'd, and perished in the ghyll;
And Death completes his flight.

As Icarus too near the sun
Was molten in the fire,
This airman on the flame did run;
And Yewdale was his pyre.

And as the chariot of red Hell
From Enna Coré reft,
Flames burst about him as he fell
In Powka Beck's rough cleft.

Scatter, O Yewdale, sombre yew
Upon his blood. Your fire,
Ye red whin-bushes, still renew
About his heathy pyre.

And hide, O moorland winds, in mist
His green and lowly grave.
Here, ye sad curlews, keep your tryst.
Ye reeds, above him wave!

## SUMMER

EVEN the flowers this perfect June,
Pouring out foison, with their boon
Hearts offer on our altar-isle
A love; while through the dark defile
Of Time our battling legions tread.
It is their tribute to the dead.

The very meadows bring their hay
In service to our land, and lay
Unstinted press of clover white
And purple fitches and delight
Of meadow-sweet, that silvery kine
May fill the foamy pails benign.

With voices mute and pleading eye
The forms of Nature silent cry
To ancient earth in this her need;
And beasts and herbs that are her seed
Minister in a several kind
With humble suit and fealty blind.

## WINTER

IN what cavern of the northern mountains,
Or by what ice-floe of the Arctic sea,
Broods Death, the snow-white bear; or by what fountains,
Moveless with frost, regards night's vacancy?

Bones lie before him in the cave, and Famine,
His shadow, haunts beside him and is still.
Unending winds blow through bare larches, claiming
The wolves of carnage from the merciless hill.

Here is the desolation of the unliving,
And here the very breath of life is froze
Upon the air. Fate wantons unforgiving,
Lack-lustre wanhope wails for evermore.

And in the brown house of the Hercynian forest
The Brown Bear of destruction apes the white—
Winter of Time that thou, O Sun, abhorrest,
Abysm of nihilism, alien of light!

T. E. Casson.

## THANKS TO RUSSIA

(Acrostic Sonnet)

TIME, being priceless in war's armoury,
Has blessed us with an Ally's sacrifice,
At cost men hold too great except to free
Name, home and every good that has no price.
Kings have been crowned with lesser gold than this
Supremest boon, this wealth of day and hour,
That comes to us from hands that cast their bliss
Of love and life aside, their deathless dower
Redeeming youth's most ardent creed, now dumb
Upon the lips that have out-braved the brave:
So shall their honour live through years to come,
Since glory rests in no forgotten grave.
In thanks to Russia is our homage given,
Amid the plaudits of all earth and heaven.

Iërne Ormsby.

May we express our admiration and appreciation for the fine work you are doing, keeping the "fine flower" of British thought, feeling, and song, blooming amid all the horror and carnage of these—thank God, always passing—days.

Our best wishes for the wider and wider spreading of the ennobling and fruitful influence of your work in a world which needs it, and which, we are sure, wants it: Two London Contributors.

## TO THEE, FAIR EARTH

TO thee, Fair Earth, source of my life's brief span,
Tribute I pay, knowing thy beauty's spell
Has recompense for all the develish hell
That racks and crucifies the living man.
Fair is thy face, entrancing is thy form;
Radiant the raiment that doth thee adorn;
Wild is thy beauty when thy breast is torn
By passion raging in malignant storm.
Womb thou hast been; dark tomb thou soon must be
Of this my life, nor seek I to escape
By vain presumption that a psychic shape
Shall roam for ever on celestial lea.
Dust of thy dust, I share thy bounty rare;
Thou only real, and all the rest a snare.

Lytham — HARRY SEFTON.

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

WHERE are they now, those fair-haired young fellows
We met at the Sloop Inn as autumn days mellowed,
When skies were a-riot with reds and with yellows?
Where are they now, with their frank sun-tanned faces,
Their chaff and their quizzical mock-solemn graces,
("Marble" they dubbed the inn's serving-wench Mabel,
And bluffed her with many a fisherman's fable!):

Where are they now, those laughing young fellows,
Hair salt-wind-blown, in impromptu apparel,
Who circled the bar or the old parlour table,
With tankards of brown ale fresh-tapped from the barrel,
(Gold pools in the lamp-bowls, the pewter mugs burning!):
Are they gone, with the gay times, beyond all returning,—
Passed through the gateway of ultimate learning?

. . . . .

Only echoes and sighs now, and grey empty spaces,
Ghosts in the low chairs,—cold desolate places,:
And down by the shore where the slow waves are turning
Sadness ineffable,—infinite yearning!

R.A.F. — E. CURT PETERS.

## THE POETS

IF men complain we have no song of war
We shall not heed—we lead the van and they
Are blind of understanding, have not marked
The deep uplifting of man's soul : the days
To hymn war's praise are dead. With all the rest
We stand to arms, but yet our mind has caught
A radiant truth the scoffers dream not of.

Ours is the vision, ours the sovran power
To shape the things to come. These little men
Who lead the world to death, their tyrant boasts
Are but a trivial wind, a passing breath :
Homer and Dante, Shakespeare and his kin—
And we who follow with our faltering song—
Our word shall echo through eternity.

REGINALD C. EVA.

## MOESTA ET ERRABUNDA

(Baudelaire)

AGATHA, are there times when your heart flies
Far from the unclean city, this dark sea,
Back to a sea where glittering splendour lies,
Blue, deep and lucid as virginity ?
Agatha, are there times when your heart flies ?

The waves' great rhythms comfort us in toil !
What airy genius gives the raucous deep,
Singer to wind's huge organ, harsh turmoil,
This sublime art of lulling us to sleep ?
The waves' great rhythms comfort us in toil !

Train, take me ! frigate, carry me away !
Far ! far ! these muddy streets with tears are wet !
Agatha, does your sad heart sometimes say :
Far from the sins, the sorrows, the regret,
Train, take me ! frigate, carry me away !

How far you are, sweet paradise-on-earth
Where all was pleasure, love and cloudless light,

Where all we loved matched loving with its worth,
Where the heart fainted in a pure delight!
How far you are, sweet paradise-on-earth!

But the green paradise of love in childhood,
Songs, wildflowers, kisses, games one used to play,
Wine at those evening picnics in the wood,
With violin music throbbing far away—
But the green paradise of love in childhood,

Innocent paradise of furtive joys,
Further than India, China, is it fled?
Will it return for a beseeching voice,
Come back at our clear calling, from the dead,
Innocent paradise of furtive joys?

N. K. Cruickshank.

## ETERNITY

THEY ran on shining sands,
And now, at evenclose,
The last child goes;
All sounds to quiet have died
Save where the lonely tide
For ever flows.

The tides that rise and fall,
Though days to silence come,
Are like the foam
Of seas on darkling shore
Breaking for evermore
When we go home.

As children from the sands
Fade with the evening sun,
So are we gone,
But still flows endlessly
That wide, eternal sea,
Unchanged, alone.

Pauline Huthwaite.

## THE POET

HE was alone and frightened and he cried :—
" O brother ! dost thou know
The terror of unfathomable waves,
Of ever-brooding cloud ?
The horrors that abide in earth's dark caves,
The ghosts of dead birds driven before the gale,
And silence . . .
A stillness e'en lost spirits may not break ?

Hast thou been
In that strange barren land of unbelief
Where even the wind,
Lacking the Æolian harpstrings of the leaves,
The long spines on the barley sheaves,
Is dumb ?
Where the sparrow dies without its God
And the desolate cry uncomforted,
And moon and sun have ceased to be,
O brother say—
Is that world known to thee?"

He was in ecstasy and yet he cried:—
"O brother, hast thou seen
'Neath blue-grey spire the fairy-ring
On the Cathedral Green ?
Watched faun and cherub small, in laughing play
Aswing on five-barred gate ?
Known friendly eyes of moths, the tiny weight
Of robins on thy knee ?
In jasmine-scented twilight, silver-starred,
Felt Presences kind—
A Jacob's ladder leading up to God
And built of love ?
Through desolate years, O brother, wert thou blind ?
And dost thou see?"

Confused with visions he had lost his way
And so he cried :—
"In a strange, shifting, nebulous world

O brother dost thou stray?
Where sudden hope and fear
As peacock-blue upon a spider's web
Glance, dart, and disappear?
—Hear in that land
A rustling leaf pursue thee till thou turn'st
Half-apprehensive, half in certainty
Of some great good at hand?
  Dost thou know dreams
Swift, flashing—as a dragonfly
That darts across the streams
And then among the reeds is lost to sight;
As wet winds pass
Leaving a scent of lime-trees in the air,
The dream has gone, only remains delight.
O brother, dost thou fare
Through that world strange and dim?"
  He was alone and called into the void.
His voice was weak and no one answered him.

FRANCES PRITCHARD.

## ETERNITY

A SLEEPLESS child, in night's secluded hours,
Is vexed by problems day has left behind;
Imagination with unbridled powers,
Perturbs and fevers his uneasy mind.

World without end. Amen. Can it be true?
On, on, forever on: the senses reel.
To be a brother to the Wandering Jew,
And hapless boaster on a fiery wheel.

But, wakeful age knows more insidious fears:
It has beheld the ruined blossom bough,
And reaped the harvest of the wasted years;
Now, it is left without a field to plough.

It dreads, regret's undying sting may be
The soul's conception of eternity.

G. S. ODDY.

## THOUGHTS BETWEEN BRICKLAYING

I LOOKED into the mirror of the mirror of truth ;
There was no sign on its unruffled surface.
No cloud passed, no bird. But behind the mirror
There were things moving—shadows, unrealities.
Where there is a shadow I seek the substance,
Discerning reality by its negation.

The oracles are silent. In vain the entrails are spread
By the marshes of the Vistula and beneath the Midnight Sun,
Upon the sands of Dunkirk and distant Libya.
Is my question its answer? Chaos its own exponent?
And what shall the womb of things to be bring forth
If the womb itself be chaos, O Zarathustra?

Say not murder will out when thieves fall out,
And one cries Stop Thief who late called him Brother.
These are no ways, the knowledge of things that are ;
For he who said : " I am greater than the Universe
Which crushes me, who knows that I am crushed,"
Spoke truth but not life. And the lifeless truth
Is the unresurrected body of God in the tomb.

I seek the truth Promethean. Fire for our world
That must be. Ground of my faith is none
But Pascal's Reasons of the Heart that Reason
Recks not. I would go forward at this moment
Beyond the last arc of the Impossible—
(*Credo, quia impossible?* It may be ;
That's what a man says when beset by idiots.)
We must achieve the impossible—or nothing.

It is not a matter of how it will all end ;
It is a question of how it is all to begin.
The secret of a chaos : it has no end in itself.
The world has been trying to end for years ;
It cannot—it can only deteriorate,
And to devolution nature has set no limits.

The evil thing is that there is no end in it—
You will make an end only by making a beginning.
Quench your torch : see how the darkness creeps
Inwards upon the vacuum abandoned of light,
And night ends only in the rebirth of fire.

Promethean Truth : others have seen you cold,
Chaste, unregarding, distant. In my eyes
You are of our world—not for the pedant, the mathematician,
Who would embalm you and lay you among the Pyramids,
But living, divine and human, in this moment—
God's Zero Hour. Or Never. REGINALD REYNOLDS.

## EPITAPH

IF you should die and leave me here
I'll shed no tear upon your bier,
for you would never have it so.
I'll bury you up where the breezes blow,
up by the church on the opposite hill :
and there'll have you, true and still.
Whenever I gaze from this our room
I'll bid farewell to pale-eyed gloom,
for there, by that familiar wood
which shaded us when life was good,
there shall I know your spirit roams
over the beeches, the gorse, and the loams.
And though I never see your face,
nor gaze again upon your grace,
yet, when the breeze blows on my cheek,
I'll know you're up and out to seek
me waiting here to join with you,
me waiting patient, firm, and true.
When the flowers bloom on the banks
I'll think of you, and give you thanks
that you have sped them on their way
to make the world a holiday
for eyes like yours and eyes like mine.

When the summer grasses shine,
aglitter all with crystal dew,
I'll gaze my fill, and know it's you
who, from your rest upon the hill,
exerts your loving spirit still,
and charms the earth to please most fully
him whom once you pleased so dearly.
When the valleys fill with rain,
I'll know that you, love, are in pain,
and move, impatient in your rest,
to join with him who loves you best.
And when wild winds uproot the trees,
when cattle crouch, and still pools freeze,
then shall I know that you are calling,
then shall I know that you are waiting.
There shall you sleep, alive in death,
a monument upon the heath
to years which Time has snatched away,
as night doth steal the light from day.

J. H. B. Peel.

## RENUNCIATION

AN arm, an arm O God, to strike and rase!
Destruction raging from Thy hate of Hate,
Though spirit shrinks beneath a night of Fate,
Silence the wisdom of the shining days,
Shatter the altars of the senses' praise,
Self-love and pride that sits in regal state
And every rose that makes the sense elate
Stamp with the sorrow of the crying ways.

Freed from the bonds of my own Heaven and Hell
I'll be myself, in innocence of dearth,
Darkness all bloomless of the gains of greed,
With pain that sleeps and has no more to tell,
With but my life to make a song of worth
Naked to gaze upon the Life indeed.

Charles Woodhouse.

## HEREAFTER ?

WHEN I am dead and my old bones are dust,
I wonder will my soul, my quiddity,
Be seized by some supernal power and thrust
Forthwith to Heav'n or shall I wander free ?
Shall I have changed the tyranny of flesh,
That leaves me some small freedom of the Will
And, as a ghost, be forced to strive afresh
With spectral tyrants, more remorseless still ?

Here, anyhow, are many faiths and creeds
To pick and choose, that sourly prophesy
A judgment for deserts, but nought for needs
That will be so important when I die.
The Heaven that so oppressed my infancy,
With harps and wings for those that did no wrong,
May suit the saintly but is not for me,
Who have so little aptitude for song.

To talk of freedom while we walk the Earth
And not desire it in the after-death,
When one is dead so long, is cause for mirth,
If one could chuckle on a failing breath.
Nay ! I'll have none of these religious faiths,
These priestly dreams of holy discipline,
With squads of harping, disembodied wraiths,
Too busy strumming to remember Sin.
I would be free to haunt my friends, unseen,
To know their hearts and weigh their every deed,
To know a god's detachment, cool, serene,
To laugh at them or with them at their need.
To try, with lessons learned, to break the fall
Of loved ones stumbling on uncharted ways
And, knowing all things, to forgive them all,
Remembering my own unperfect days.
Who knows ? by wishing I might find a power
To give a pleasure or to soothe a care,
Might float unseen, in fragrance, like a flower
Or drift, a wholesome tonic, in the air !

H. W. HARDING.

# A VIEW OF MODERN POETRY

MISS RUTH PITTER'S latest volume, *The Rude Potato* (Cresset Press), is not meant to be serious verse, but in it she again shows what an adept and competent versifier she is. She takes everything in her stride. This well-produced little book is addressed chiefly to gardeners, amateur gardeners presumably, and, though it is not a manual or text-book, they may well get some amount of amusement from it one way or another.

> Comic potatoes do occur,
> But in the life of Jimmy Burr
> Who's handled many scores of tons
> And spotted all the funny ones,
> This was the rudest he had met.

is a fair example of her art in the title-poem. Interspersed with her poems are drawings by Roger Furse—" charmingly illustrated " as the dust-jacket puts it—some of which are amusing. I'm afraid I was tempted to wonder if the charming, if somewhat scantily clad, girl in some of the pictures facing the verses written in the first person was really Miss Pitter. However that may be, Mr. Furse has not dared draw the rude potato itself, nor has Miss Pitter dared to describe it other than allusively. It sent Mitzi " (from the Danube shore) " into peals of laughter however, and the poem ends enigmatically with a moral.

> O Science ! can you make us mirth
> Like this dull apple of the earth ?
> And what in art can do us good
> Like this, so nourishing, so lewd ?
> Only by life such joy is lent,
> Wild, bracing, and inconsequent.

Towards the end of the book there are a few more serious poems.

Miss Edith Sitwell's *Street Songs* (Macmillan) are in contrast most stark and deadly serious, and perhaps better adapted to the times. For here, as in our lives, life and death are unequivocally balanced. (This book is a war-time production, the cover writhed and contorted into the oddest shapes—all the copies in the bookshops are like that too—and the poems set out in such a way that a great many lines are unnecessarily broken up, because the words outstretched the printer's whim.) This is a good book of

poetry, though, and worth buying in spite of its appearance. It is, I'm afraid, unfair to Miss Sitwell to mix up a discussion of the contents of her book with a discussion of its exterior, but then it is also unfair to us that we cannot get one without the other. The design of a book should show off its contents to advantage. But Miss Sitwell is too great a lady to be overcome by it. She has had her share of abuse both from the young (Geoffrey Grigson's " Old Jane ") and the old, and a thing like this cover cannot really conceal the value of her poetry. It is some of the best of our time. I have to confess that I have not read her earlier books of verse—I was put off by the perverse Grigson—but many of these *Street Songs* seem to me very good indeed, notably " Poor Young Simpleton," " Still Falls the Rain," " Tears," and " The Swans."

> Once my love seemed the Burning Bush,
> The Pentecost Rushing of Flames ;
> Now the Speech has fallen to the chatter of alleys
> Where fallen man and the rising ape
> And the howling Dark play games.
>
> For she leaned from the light like the Queen of Fairies
> Out of the bush of the yellow broom . . .
> " I'll take out that heart of yours," she said,
> " And put in your breast a stone.
> O, I'll leave an empty room," she said,
> " A fouled, but an empty room."

That poem, " An Old Song Re-Sung," states the sombre theme of her *Street Songs* and shows the power of her writing as well as any. A good book of poetry for those who are not afraid of life and death stark.

Professor de Sola Pinto, as his title suggests, is a good patriot and a modest poet. At times, when he writes simply, he writes pleasantly too, as in the title poem " This is My England " (Williams and Norgate, 2s.).

> I climb the hill and see,
> Bright and amazing the green grass shine
> Through a hedge-gap in a flash of sun.

This is pleasant, it is true, but, the inversion apart, it is not specifically poetic, which is the key to one of his worst faults, an overwhelming tendency to lapse into prose.

His poem " George Fox " begins admirably and movingly, and the subject matter of it *is* moving, but the last portion is in fact nothing but cadenced prose, good prose, but prose. When he does write " poetically " he is apt to write badly. For instance,

> In my vague empty mind,
> How can you hope to find
> Rich music fit to answer the proud song
> Of your white virgin flowers
> Which through these brilliant hours
> Chant gay defiance to the world's black wrong?

To which it is tempting to answer that a less vague and empty mind would probably have been able to make something better in rivalry of the hawthorn tree to which this is addressed. Hugh MacDiarmid in his poem " Poetry Like the Hawthorn," a poem on Yeats' death, does in fact do it. Professor de Sola Pinto tries valiantly to be modern, but at his best seldom succeeds in writing better than able pastiche. His " Lord Polyphemus—A Threnody on the English Governing Class, to be Sung to Slow Music " is amusing, though, and a good light poem, and there is a good poem after the German of Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Flag."

As Thomas Moult reminds us in his preface to *The Best Poems of* 1941 (Cape 5s.), " the word ' Best ' is used on the title-page only in the sense that the poems included are his own artistic preferences." At best, a queer use of best! But not so queer as Mr. Moult's taste, generally. In a way, in theory, he does a great service in that his anthology yearly presents the work of the " best " American poets to English readers. In practice, owing to his definition of " best," a great many of the best American contemporary poets remain unknown to English readers. Wallace Stevens, for instance. It seems remarkable to me that Mr. Moult should yearly read through so many magazines, English and American, little and big, and yet bring to light so little outstanding poetry. It is true that his anthology has a certain standard of attainment, but it is a standard of pleasantness and mediocrity rather than one of brilliance

and greatness. It can be read through pleasantly and idly, but it has little that really strikes the mind or the heart. Of the pleasantest things in this year's collection are poems by Richard Rowley, an elder Irish poet little-known in this country, Donald J. Paquette, an American proletarian (his poem is scarcely pleasant, but it is vigorous and honest), Frederic Prokosch, Richard Church, Robert Frost and Walter de la Mare. "Modern" poetry is represented by Cecil Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, Michael Roberts and Louis MacNeice, but not by the best of any of them; American experimentalists by Oscar Williams, who like Rimbaud stopped writing poetry in order to indulge in business, but, unlike him, is making a come-back, Marianne Moore, Raymond Larssen and Eve Merriam. With so many good young writers in America, such a representation is astonishing. Miss Moore's poem is quite a good example of her skill, and there are five fine sonnets by Conrad Aiken, of a much more traditional kind than the poetry he has written hitherto. But they stand out above anything else in the book. Of the rest I like best R. C. Trevelyan's poem "Giants," a quiet, unassuming, well-made poem. Among things that should not be allowed in any anthology of best poems is Dorothy Sayers' "The English War" which begins by saying "Praise God, now, for an English war—" and goes on near the end to "And send, O God, an English peace—some sense, some decency, perhaps some justice too." in which even the sentiments seem a little doubtful and the verse wretched.

Mrs. Anne Ridler's anthology, *A Little Book of Modern Verse*, (Faber 3s. 6d.), is admirable. Mr. T. S. Eliot explains in his preface the sort of book it is. "In a more comprehensive collection on a similar plan, such as *The Faber Book of Modern Verse*, the beginner may find himself bewildered among the multitude of poets; with reference to such books the present volume may be regarded as a kind of primer, an introduction to anthologies." He goes on to outline the editor's purpose, "Within the narrow limits imposed by a 'little' book of verse, she has endeavoured . . . to provide an illustration of the various

styles of poetry which are generally acknowledged to be ' modern '." In other words, it is like the *Faber Book of Modern Verse*, but on a smaller scale. It contains most of the same poets, and does for ' modern ' verse much what it did. Except that it is *for beginners*. It should then, in a review, be pointed out that to a certain extent it and the larger Faber anthology are redundant. This book does not add to it or bring it up to date in any way. It is merely an introductory version. With Mrs. Ridler's choices, I have few quarrels,—it would take too long to go through the contents for the reader. I will merely mention where it differs from Michael Robert's larger Faber Book. It omits H.D., Conrad Aiken, Vachel Lindsay, Peter Quennell, Richard Eberhart, James Reeves, Clifford Dyment, and David Gascoyne. It includes instead Charles Williams, Edwin Muir, John Betjeman, Frederic Prokosch, K. J. Raine, W. R. Rodgers, Bernard Spencer, Francis Scarfe, Lawrence Durrell, Kenneth Allott, F. T. Prince, Anne Ridler, Henry Treece and Ruthven Todd. On the whole, these alterations make exceedingly little difference. Of course, there is also a difference in the selections from individual poets. Some of these I think better, some worse. I think Madge's longish poem in this anthology is bad, dull, and certainly difficult for a beginner. On the other hand the choice from Edith Sitwell seems to me much more satisfactory. Of the changes, I think it good that Edwin Muir, Lawrence Durrell, and Anne Ridler should be included, and bad that Conrad Aiken should be left out. He is a very good poet for beginners, and his style is certainly not like any of the others represented. The other chief quarrel I have with it is that Wallace Stevens is not represented by any of his recent poems. There is also no poet represented who is younger than twenty-eight—but perhaps that is as well. There is little remaining to be said about it. For those who want to know what " modern " poetry is, *for beginners*, it is an indispensable book. For those who have not the larger Faber book already, it contains some of the best poetry of our time, by Yeats, Wallace Stevens, Eliot, Robert Graves, John Crowe Ransom, and numerous

younger writers from Auden to Barker. I do not think it suffers in comparison with the poetry of other decades. In fact I think we have more good poets now than at any time since the Elizabethans. NICHOLAS MOORE.

## IF DEATH SHOULD COME

IF death should come, why should I therefore grieve
To leave this world of pleasure and despair,
Or crave of time some respite, to achieve
The treasured goal which I envisaged there?
Will life for my departing be less fair,
Or grief be less, or love be less divine,
Fear be less cowed, courage less debonair,
When to life's giver I my breath resign?
No. Love will speak through other lips than mine,
And sorrow's tears bring ease to others' woe,
When my declining years to death decline;
So has it been and must be always so.
Each life must die, but when each life is gone
In other lives the life of Life lives on.

W. R. LATHAM.

## AIR-RAID

THE guns all night have rent the pall of sleep
And flung their mounting anger to the stars,
Whilst myriad death, winged to the very bars
Of heaven, has poured in torrents from the steep
Its livid, torturing fire. Deep and more deep
In sheltering earth, partaker of their scars,
The blind, mad victims of revenging Mars
In blood and mud and slime together creep.

O shall no more the small white blossom blow,
Nor silence greet again the harvest moon?
Nor here where greatest kings of old have trod
Shall beauty be, and cleanliness, and God?
The stricken fields with high-heaped dead are strewn,
And all the world goes weary of her woe.

HENRY CLAYTON.

## LOVE

TRUE Love can such enchantment bring,
That when its rapture first is met
Two hearts to Paradise take wing,
And everything but Love forget ;
Their Love seems such a sacred prize
They seek the paths that are unknown,
Where, shielded from unhallowed eyes,
They worship at their shrine alone.

What joys in precious moments live
True Love alone can truly tell,
It learns what happiness can give
To know the sadness of farewell.
How vague reality can seem
If Love by ecstasy is stirred,
When lovers in the silence dream
The wings of Time are seldom heard.

LESLIE GREENE.

## TO THE GREEKS

ABOUT Parnassus where the eagles soar
The Muses sang ; but now sing there no more
From fair Castalia's fountain flow its waters,
Questing the valley for its vanished daughters.
O'er the Acropolis a banner flies
Symbolical of hatred and of lies,
Denying all the right to liberty,
Oppressing every man who would be free,
Bowing his neck to tremble neath the weight
Of blind submission to a foreign state.
This in a country that once taught to man
The value of his soul's unfettered span,
Taught too, philosophy that searched the skies
For wisdom that all ages still should prize !
Must it then perish ?—must the sage's voice
No more proclaim to man his right of choice
To guide his destiny, but humbly bend
To tyrants who will goad him to his end ?
The Gods have vanished from Olympus's snows ;

Far from the world they sleep ; and no one knows
Whether they sleep for ever or will wake
And rouse themselves again for Freedom's sake.
In Delphi's vale the Oracle is still,
No Pythoness in trance proclaims their will.
Look elsewhere then, and see in other lands
The freedom taught by Greece, still in the hands
Of those who now must rouse them to the fight
Lest the world perish in eternal night.
And still the voice that every free man seeks
Comes echoing from the country of the Greeks
To tell mankind from those who may be said
To live,—who fought for Freedom and are dead,—
Calling to their successors from their graves.
" Better to die as we did than be slaves ! "

J. Sackville Martin.

## IN LUMINIS ORAS

ONE day I'll leave this silly world
And climb a rainbow to the sky ;
And with the wings of angels fly ;
And see eternity unfurled.

I'll dance with cherubs : life will be
An endless tapestry of dreams.
I'll swim down golden sunlight streams,
And slip into a sunset sea.

I'll drink my beer at heavenly bars ;
And chat with Peter at the Gate ;
And scold the souls that come up late ;
And light my cigarettes from stars.

J. R. Blyth.

Mr. Donald Wolfit, providing a pending production of a new *Garrick* permits, will commemorate Shakespeare's birthday at the Friday matinée at 33 Portman Square, W.1, at 5.15 p.m. on April 24th.

*Experiments by E. Radcliffe Binnington:*

## NIGHTSHIFT

IF I never forget wholly the moths of the evening field,
At a footstep on the stubble
Miraculously rising, soft with silver;
Or the swan's flight or the water of the river
And the small weeds befriending a stony place;
Recall often the lion coloured pastures
Of home, and the chaste light of my long marshes,
Sullen and holy, garnished not for strangers—

Recall, recall, invoke and will not learn this absence,
I shall be their familiar and with them
Shall finally, for faith, be brought to sojourn.

## POLISH SOLDIER

IN the slanting light, in the long watch, on the gull-reflecting shore
With the treacherous heart, oh, knotting to endure
A wind blowing south east, blowing from home; then one achieves
The dreggy last of hope, thank God, and spits it out: a face of wood,
a heart of glass,
A home nowhere on earth, these only bless
Exile; are comfort to them who are comfortless.

Ah, but campward marching, in the November birches, half in mist,
Exquisitely tawny, dewy, evening lit,
The two bull calves rub cheeks. They wear a crown of leaves.
Well, Sorrow, hope's more merciless than grief, faith more importunate.
To the last breath it is not given to forget
It seems, daffodil, crocus, Polish violet.

E. Radcliffe Binnington.

## EXILED

THIS year, I shall not see the rolling russet moor
Leaning her lovely shoulder on the skies
To catch a curl of mist and wear it mantle-wise,
Before the clouds, piled-purple sudden silver pour,
Urging the stream to new and louder melody.
My hair will not be sprinkled with the blackthorn-snow,
Mouse-path nor nest of willow-wren I shall not know.
Nor seek the bubble glint of wood-anemone.
For me, in vain the spindleberry taps the pane.

Gold-eyed, the ever-watchful weed will greenly creep
Across the path to where the foxgloves swing in sleep
I may not walk those flow'ry loops of Devon lane,
Nor see above a rosy-clouded almond rod
The slowly paling shimmer of the morning star,
But this I know, that I am richer far
For having known and deeply loved these gifts of God . . .
Sometimes, it seems, that through the gloom of this sad street
Rise tufty pink-belled heaths or mists of meadowsweet,
While, clear above the roar of traffic—in my heart
I hear again, the tranquil singing of the Dart.

EILEEN RADCLIFFE DIX.

## CONFESS (A COUNTRY DANCE)

COME to me, meet me! Ere the corn is high
We'll go a-roving underneath the sky.
Shall fears by night, or pessimists by day
Forbid the lark to sing, or us to play?
Confess! confess! though all around goes ill
The world is lovely and we love it still!

Take hands; and circling where the grass is sweet
We'll measure out a path for dancing feet
Or chase the morning shadows where they flow
Along the hay when winds of heaven blow.
Confess! confess! though we are shadows too
We will live merrily our short life through.

Come to me, meet me! Are we not akin
To this brigh warmth we love to linger in?
Have we not seen the poppy-flame and heard
The hunger-cry of naked nestling bird?
Confess! confess! the world is all awry,
Yet we are glad to live and loath to die!

Harrogate. D. E. CHRISTINE TOMLIN.

I sincerely hope that nothing will ever stop THE POETRY REVIEW from arriving bi-monthly on my doorstep. It means even more to those of us in the Services than to those whose books are at hand and who have time to read extensively. Believe me your work is more than appreciated amongst the men and women I have talked to whilst on duty. Many thanks for the pleasure it has given me personally.—L. T. Taylor, Argyll.

# DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: XCI

*The Collected Sonnets* of Edna St. Vincent Millay (Harper Bros., New York) are exquisitely presented—it is a volume all lovers of poetry will wish to include in their libraries. What more is there to say about the genius of Miss Millay than has already been said? These 161 pages carry undisputed evidence of her genius. Turning the pages one marks one and another as being specially sympathetic and finds at last one has marked the major part of the book. A sonnet seldom quoted follows: one may call it " Dedicate To May and December "—

Oh, my beloved, have you thought of this:
How in the years to come unscrupulous Time,
More cruel than Death, will tear you from my kiss,
And make you old, and leave me in my prime?
How you and I, who scale together yet
A little while the sweet, immortal height
No pilgrim may remember or forget,
As sure as the world turns, some granite night
Shall lie awake and know the gracious flame
Gone out forever on the mutual stone;
And call to mind that on the day you came
I was a child, and you a hero grown?—
And the night pass, and the strange morning break
Upon our anguish for each other's sake!

John Finley, editor, educator and author, was born in Grand Ridge, Ill., in 1863. His sudden death on March 7th, 1940, closed a life of unusual activity in his three chosen fields. Best known for his long association with the *New York Times*, Doctor Finley was also internationally famous as an educator, holding honorary degrees from a score of colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. For his work during the World War he was made an Officer of the Legion of Honour by the French Republic and received high honours from many other nations. And here in his *Poems* (Scribner's) we find this uncommon gentleman expressing the many moments that he trusted to the printed page. There is a marked religious trend through these poems. Let us read the opening " Matins ":

These things I do engage to do:
Hourly to keep my doing true
To what my conscience knows;
To send my soul upon its round
Of this day's duty with no sound
Of plaining of my woes;

To live more worthy of their love
Whom I do love all else above—
And fight my rightful foes.
God give me guidance in my ways

To do the things I should :
God give me length and strength of days
To do the things I would.

Many of the striking personalities of our day Dr. Finley describes. In a quatrain entitled " Shadow Brook " Dr. Finley says of Andrew Carnegie :

Beyond the dark Brook of the Shadow he's gone
On over the hills and the moors towards the dawn,
This Laird o' the castle by Dornoch's gray firth
To find the Great Peace he had sought for the earth.

A quatrain to Commander Byrd is explained by the following Note : " Written on receiving (June 4th, 1929) the following radiogram from Little America, Antarctica :

" Dear Doctor Finley, Due to my very high regard for you, I have decided to name the trail to the Bay over which we carried hundreds of tons of material, the John Finley Trail. We hope also to be able to put your name on the map on this side. Best of good wishes, Byrd."

Though Keats's name be thought in water writ,
Oblivion's waves have not extinguished it ;
And though mine's writ in snow, I yet may claim
Remembrance—since it's written with your name.

Meaningful is a poem entitled " The Red Cross Spirit Speaks " : The opening stanza follows :

Wherever war, with its red woes,
Or flood, or fire or famine goes,
There, too, go I ;
If earth in any quarter quakes,
Or pestilence its ravage makes,
Thither I fly.

I am an American and I have been privileged to tell since 1922 what America is Doing For Poetry ! During these many years I can recite at any time two lyrics, both written by Sara Teasdale, of whom that great friend of all miserable Edwin Markham says : " In the purity of her song, Sara Teasdale is placed first as the American poet of lyric love." " Let It Be Forgotten " is one of them :

Let it be forgotten, as a flower is forgotten,
Forgotten as a fire that once was singing gold,
Let it be forgotten for ever and ever,
Time is a kind friend, he will make us old.

If anyone asks, say it was forgotten
Long and long ago,
As a flower, as a fire, as a hushed footfall
In a long forgotten snow.

The other morning, waking, the lines of John Masefield came to me

and I thought it was " stay with me beauty," but how much better were *his* lines : " Be with me beauty for the fire is dying." Now this is all because I am about to review a new appreciation of Carl Sandburg, one of the giants of America—*A Study in Personality and Background*, by Karl Detzer (Harcourt, Brace & Co.). Karl Detzer is a journalist of wide experience, born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1891. He worked as reporter, photographer, a feature writer on Fort Wayne newspapers until 1916, then served in the Mexican border campaign and as a Captain in the first world war. His career has continued with the same stimulating history and it is small wonder that the personality of Carl Sandburg has appealed to him to the extent of his writing a most appreciative, sincere and brilliant study of this outstanding American writer. The book contains a number of arresting photographs and the closing chapter gives an intensely interesting account of Carl Sandburg's admitted appreciation and admiration of Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Detzer continues : " That's how he thinks of Lincoln, how he speaks of him, not with authority but with a kindly intimacy, as one refers to a member of one's own family. Fury rises in his voice when he mentions some injustice done to Lincoln. His tone is full of pity when he speaks of the President's wife, and he writes sympathetically of her in his *Mary Lincoln, Wife and Widow*, published in 1932 : " She was hard to get along with, she had faults and yet when people speak in a certain easy unkindly way of her, I don't like it." . . . Carl Sandburg knows Lincoln better than any other man ever knew him, better even than those who were closest to him in life, because Sandburg's advantage is a perspective of eighty years. Ask him where he wrote this book, where he actually set down the million words on paper, and he points to the old typewriter on a low well-worn table in the corner of the garret with a low chair behind it. He sits down on the edge of the table, and one has the feeling that Lincoln had sat there beside him, hour after hour, helping with the book, one gaunt plain American speaking simple words to another gaunt plain American."

Perhaps the most important thing to say about Dr. Hugh Findlay is that he was born in Ayr, Scotland. Through the mind travels the fragrance of Scotch poetry, Scotch mists and, if one is so disposed, Scotch whisky. That Dr. Findlay is professor of landscape architecture in Columbia University and is the author of four books on horticultural subjects pales before the fact that he is the author of three books of poems : *The Imperishable Earth*, *The Stone of Destiny* and now *The Isle of Destiny* (Kaleidograph Press, Texas). No less an illustrious voice than Joseph Auslander's praises this man's poetry :

> " If poetry may be defined as a way of remembering what it would impoverish us to forget, then in very truth this book is an authentic and impassioned history of the earth and of the best moments in one earth-lover's mind and heart."

Dr. Findlay prefaces his poem " Remembering " with the following :

" I watched the cold light follow a little family of leaves. They hurried across the road, driven by the wind, into a hollow already filled with darkness. They were like withered people huddled about a mysterious hope in a dim cellar. They huddled for a last word together, though the damp beads of death were on the walls."

The first two stanzas of this poem follow :

They poured their memory into broken cups
Displacing shadows of a spring long past ;
Their withered hands held fragments of old pain
Mixed with some pleasure they recalled again.

They knew the earth smell and the press of time,
And fingered their decisions with slow care,
Remembering the wind-escorted rain
And waves of beauty drifting through the grain.

The *New York Times* had the honour of publishing " Roses Remembered " :—

The heart of the rose
Took leave of its breath,
Some said it was death—
Yet death is but life
In search of a truth
Unveiled in our youth,
Remembered in age ;
So the heart of the rose
But rests in repose
When death takes its breath
And leaves fragrance instead
In a memory not dead.

Let us close the collection from a man sympathetic to the beauty and the horror, the light and the shade of life's experience, with a short poem entitled " Roads "—

There are roads that lead to laughter,
And roads that lead to tears,
And bleak untravelled roads that wind
Through shadows and through fears.
But when my heart is heavy
And I am all alone,
I hope to find the little road
That takes me to my own.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

*LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:*

## THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF POETRY

I would like to write something in support of the idea of a Royal Academy of Poetry, the formation of which in certain conditions would, I think, be a very good thing, but the attainment of those conditions would be very difficult. The danger would be that all the best poets would not be R.A.P.s either because they did not want to be or because they were not elected. It is all very well to have forty elected R.A.P.s, but who is going to select them? Without analysing the situation thoroughly, it is still safe to say that there are four or five different schools, groups or whatever you like to call them, of poetry—that is rough groups who have the same ideas about poetry and the same poets they admire, whether they are writers or readers. Obviously they should all be fairly represented in the Royal Academy of Poetry. All danger of the R.A.P., as I will call it, being a brake on poetic experiment and freedom must be avoided. It could not afford to have one of its greatest acknowledged poets outside the academy, as for instance Sickert was outside the Royal Academy, nor can it afford to reject the art of its dissidents as Wyndham Lewis was rejected. If it does this, it cannot retain sufficient respect.

I am therefore going to make some practical proposals, a skeleton on which perhaps the R.A.P. could be constructed. (1) There should be twenty-five members. (2) A committee of twelve of these, chosen in rotation, should sit to select the poems for exhibition, that is the annual book of poems that will be the equivalent of the Royal Academy painting exhibition. (3) That the method of selection be as follows: (*a*) Poets be invited to send their exhibits to any one of the twelve on the selection committee, of their own choice. He can refuse the exhibits outright, or he can keep them and recommend them. If he refuses them, the poet can try to get any of the other eleven, or all of them, to recommend his work if he so wishes. (*b*) Having decided on the poems he is going to recommend, each elector will have eleven copies made to distribute to his fellow-members (or perhaps the aspiring poet should be required to have the copies made). They will then signify on their copies which of the distributed poems they favour for inclusion, and having read them and made up their mind what they think of the poems submitted and recommended, they will meet to make the selection. (*c*) The selection shall be made in the following manner. Each poem shall be voted on in turn. To be elected as an exhibit nine of the twelve electors must vote for its inclusion. With the following exception, that each selector shall have the privilege of highly recommending not more than three poems. For these "highly recommended" poems he need only have the support of three of his colleagues to get them accepted.

I think this method of selection will be as watertight as possible, provided, of course, that the initial R.A.P.s are the right people and represent all schools. Finally as R.A.P.s I suggest the following: John Masefield, Clifford Bax, T. Sturge Moore, T. S. Eliot, Wilfrid Gibson, Stephen Spender, Henry Treece, Galloway Kyle, Edith Sit-

well, Osbert Sitwell, Richard Church, Herbert Read, Charles Williams, Robert Graves, Ronald Bottrall, Lord Corell, Dallas Kenmare, Naomi Royde Smith, Michael Roberts, Anne Ridler, Frances Cornford, Walter de la Mare, Herbert Palmer, Edgell Rickword, Sherard Vines, Lord Dunsany, Louis MacNeice, Alan Rook, Julian Symons, W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas. That makes thirty or so and probably there are many that have not come to mind. These could be voted for by the subscribers to all current poetry journals or journals that carry poetry, each subscriber voting for ten only, to obviate the count. The first twenty-five to be the new R.A.P.s. Of course, they can vote for anyone who's not on the list. The criterion should be services rendered to poetry whether it be as writer, critic or editor, with reference of course given to writers.

What about starting it? But one of the greatest snags of all remains. Will the state subsidise it? If not, I'm afraid I cannot see where the money is coming from to print the annual volume or to pay for the expenses involved. But if the state subsidises painting, why not subsidise poetry? There are countries in which all the arts are looked after. Why should not ours be one?

NICHOLAS MOORE.

P.S.—A.R.A.P.s could be elected, as occasion arose, by the R.A.P.s on the recommendation of any one of them, for any outstanding book of poems or poems published. They would join with the R.A.P.s in voting for a successor to any vacancy that fell open on the death of an R.A.P.

## "BYZANTIUM"

It is a very real pleasure still to be able to read THE POETRY REVIEW in war-time, not as an escape but as a refreshment. Recently, in a W.E.A. Group here, I heard it stated by the tutor, a University lecturer, that the poem "Byzantium" by W. B. Years was too obscure to be understood by university students without considerable help from the tutor. Oh returning home, I re-read it, and thought I should like, as an interesting experiment, to set down my own impressions before those ideas were coloured or affected in any way by another opinion. Then it will be more stimulating, at a later stage, to hear what others think.

I have never heard this poem discussed by anyone, though I first read it some time ago.

The poem is an extremely interesting one, written in 1930 in Yeats's later style, with an economy, a brilliance of compression, a depth of thought and a mastery of pattern that make the elucidation a fascinating "winding path."

The title calls up a two-fold image of a decadent Byzantine Empire and a mystical religion finding expression in the stiff, symmetrical designs, glowing colours and symbolistic attitudes of an art that has no use for the realistic or photographic. There are curious resem-

blances between Byzantine and early Celtic art, and it is not an accident that Yeats is attracted to the various forms of Byzantine knowledge especially in his dramatic art,

> "The hour of convention and decoration and ceremony is coming again."

In the first verse is an emotional impression of the silence and aloof tranquillity of the evening sky, after the drunken rioting of the Emperor's soldiers, the raucous songs of the night walkers, the ringing of the cathedral bells. In that quiet, that purity and serenity, all eternal and changeless in themselves, the thoughts and doings of man seem infinitesimal, muddled and dirty.

Yet, in the second stanza, the poet knows that man is not just a little dirty, insignificant creature. He has imagination, the brush of his soul, that can paint for him images of the Eternal. His imagination (or his soul) is much greater than the outward trappings of his body.

Perhaps after death in the Land of Shadows, he may find a clue to the maze, to "this riddle of life, that is a tangle of perplexities." A ghost may be able to communicate with and learn from other ghosts, but in this life, the only means of communication with the spiritual world that the poet has is his imagination. With it he can create or recognize the superhuman, but the act of creation is at once an ecstasy and a torment. "I call it death-in-life and life-in-death." The ecstasy is so shot with pain and the agony with glory there is no dividing the two.

In the third verse Yeats thinks of the artist's creation (a poem, a book, a painting, or perhaps a piece of sculpture or a building). He compares this to a golden bird made for the Emperor's pleasure in a Byzantine garden. The thing created is a work of genius, but it is not, in the maker's eyes, so wonderful as the thing seen in his inspired imagination. Yet the artist's creation may excel, in his eyes, the ordinary birds or flowers or anything in nature that is a mixture of flesh and spirit, or is capable of decay and change. [Shelley didn't think of a skylark as an ordinary bird with a nest and eggs. It was just a celestial voice. "Bird thou never wert."]

The bird of golden metal does not age or wither or become defiled, but though it can inspire the imaginations of those who look at its beauty on "the starlit golden bough," its cold chastity "by the moon embittered," has a repellant aloofness. Another side of our human nature rebels against this ascetic devotion to art, that would have no association with "complexities of mire and blood." In other times there was not this divorce between life and art, but both were indissolubly united, and each vitally necessary to the other.

In the fourth verse, the very thought of this "mire or blood" calls up an image of the fires that can consume us, burning up remorselessly our passions, vexations, yearnings, angers, frustrations in the white-heat of inspiration that is a dance, a trance and a flame.

All life is a ceaseless conflict for those whose imaginations and

bodies have never achieved a harmony. If the flesh be an enemy instead of a friend, if it degrades thought instead of enriching it with new experience, the human being is " dolphin-torn, in a gong-tormented sea." His wild, fish spirit that would be leaping freely in the water of life is continually held back or tortured by the attitude of the organized world about him; or else his whole being is a disharmony of his natural (i.e. fleshly) and spiritual selves.

There is a lacerating fury in the last two stanzas dangerously like that of Swift. I wonder how much of it may be due to similar characteristics in Yeats and Swift.

The flood of words suggests a virtue in excess, as if " no purging of the day's images " is possible without that spiritual overflow. Yeats often shows a contempt for English whiggery, the Via Media, the path of worldly safety and so-called common sense. In the poem " Sailing to Byzantium," he asks the sages in a mosaic to come from the holy fire and be the singing masters in his soul.

> " Consume my heart away: sick with desire
> And fastened to a dying animal,
> It knows not what it is; and gather me
> Into the artifice of eternity."

I find the same sick longing in many of the mystical poems of Emily Brontë; the same revulsion when the straining spirit, which has reached some consummation in its ecstasy, is forced to return to the prison of its body.

And it seems to be true that such experiences are only for those who have known spiritual excess, just as the shadows (our spirit selves) are blackest and clearest either in bright sunlight, or at night-time. In our greatest happiness or despair, we are most aware we have both souls and imagination.

It is not surprising Yeats so frequently mentions birds in his poems. If one believed, with Pythagoras, in the transmigration of souls, one could think of Yeats as a bird in some previous existence.

He refers not only to the golden metal bird, fashioned by the artist, but to the cock of Hades, suggesting a herald or announcer, crowing to prophesy or record something significant; or perhaps the cock is just the gaily-tinted male bird bringing the energy and defiance of life even into Hades itself. The cock also recalls to us a man, devoted companion who betrayed his Friend and Master as we all, at some time or other, betray the finest in our selves.

What a splendid, colourful, vigorous poem this is to read aloud. Some lines taste like a sip of Benedictine; just a sip and a flavour, that give a glow to the mind; not a drunken orgy of language without intellectual balance or control. Here is a rich combination of lovely vowels and crisp consonants in the composition of a master of verbal music and changing rhythms. But it needs an audience of people whose ears and minds have not been vitiated by speed and the shallows of materialism; people who have not forgotten how to listen atten-

tively and with close, wrapt concentration to the sounds heard by the inward ear.

Yet this is a poem, that, when the wildness, the light and fury have come to an end, leaves one with a curious melancholy, an unresolved harmony, a sense of mysteries still intangible, a spirit not yet made flesh.

Ferryhill, Co. Durham. D. R. W. Carr.

### A Reply to Mr. Cullen-Jones

I would like to reply to Mr. Cullen-Jones' " Review of Reviews " so far as it concerns the article on T. S. Eliot. Analyzing this review it seems to me to have been written for the sole purpose of expressing the final phrase, " wholesale rot." It is good to get things off the chest in a jolly way. Referring to the ambiguity of " nothingness," I should enjoy a similar joviality by introducing a few qualifying adjectives to the variations of such a classical term as rot. But it is pleasant to realize that Mr. Cullen-Jones and I agree that, " poetry is basically a series of concrete images." I remember Sir John Squires used the imagery of a door with great effect in the last war when he wrote of " Guns which sounded like the opening and shutting of doors " as indeed they did open and shut doors between heaven and hell. The concrete image of a door stimulates the imagination to a sense of transition from one set of associated ideas to another. *That* is the point Eliot gained. Its texture ?—Well, that depends on requirement. May I suggest *reinforced* concrete as more acceptable to Mr. Cullen-Jones' present feelings.

As examples of concrete images I gave the axle tree sapphires, and garlic. The latter if lamentably elusive at least presents recognition in unmistakable form. An essay necessarily travels at speed, considerably raised in war time. I quote from Herbert Read : " It is a general view that the essay gives—not a biography nor a critical analysis, not a history nor a treatise. It is personal in its approach, but not intimate ; objective rather than discursive. On any subject of permanent interest it should give the point of view of an age or generation ; it should revise accepted opinions in the light of new knowledge." Examples: Ancient opinion, accepted—

" —Or a garden bower'd close
With plaited alleys of the trailing rose
Long alleys falling down to twilight grots,
Or opening upon level plots
Of crowned lilies, standing near
Purple spiked lavender ;
Whitish in after life retired
From brawling storms,
From weary wind,
With youthful fancy re-inspired,
We may hold converse with all forms
Of the many-sided mind—etc." (Tennyson).

Revised opinion:

" Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind." (Eliot).

Mr. Cullen-Jones gives me the credit of splitting hairs. May I reciprocate the bouquet—he quarters them!

I am afraid this letter will take time to reach him in California. That, and Arizona, were amongst the most beautiful states I visited *before* the war.

Puttenham, Surrey. E. M. Stephenson.

### Joy and Serenity

When I adjudicated for the Junior Challenge Cup, I remarked to the winning candidate that the delivery of her own selection, " Crossing the Bar," lacked the sense of " joy " that, in my opinion, underlies all poetry, however sad. Miss Vaughan Jenkins suggests that in the case of this poem " serenity " would be a more fitting word. In reply, I would describe joy as an impulse of the spirit, and serenity as an experience of the intellect. I agree that the poem conveys the idea of serenity but that does not alter my contention that joy was at the heart of the impulse that prompted its expression. Miss Vaughan Jenkins further suggests that of all our agreeable sensations contentment is the most passive, and joy the most exuberant and demonstrative impelling man " to let off steam " in shout or song or dance. This is precisely my implication. Generally speaking, I would say that serenity is too settled a condition to inspire creative activity, or, to use the modern jargon (so amusingly ridiculed by Mr. A. P. Herbert in the last 1941 number of *Punch*) too " static " or even " recumbent " for the dancing element of poetry. Serenity may ride the surface of a poem but joy is at least one of the underlying currents of emotion,—the joy of expression. This is my experience and conviction and I feel sure its acceptance would go far to cure the morbid tones in which verse is too often delivered, and which give it a defeatist rather than triumphant note. I think the concluding lines

" I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the Bar"

express spiritual joy and the urge of adventurous excitement,—not merely an established serenity. Surely there is the joy of anticipation as well as that of " fulfilled hope " of which Miss Vaughan Jenkins speaks.

The fusion of opposites is, I think, discernible in all emotions and essential to their fulness, for is not the strength of the one measured by the intensity of the other? Perhaps I have expressed this in the following lines which may hint at my meaning without restricting it:

Delight is the strength of a tear-drop,
And Sorrow the gold on a leaf,
And is not an April rainbow
The marriage of Joy and Grief?

Guildford, February 9th. ROBERTA SHUTTLEWORTH.

## MR. ALAN ROOK'S ROAD TO NONSENSE

He calls it the road to nonsense and we have not to travel far along it before nonsense confronts us. Let me give you an example; he writes (p. 25): "There is after all no reason why poetry should have meaning." And by "meaning" he intends "intelligibility," that is clear from the context.

There is, therefore, no reason why poetry should not be nonsense, because words without meaning are nonsense; just as a body without a soul is a dead thing, words without *sense* are dead things and can claim no place in a living language. And can meaningless words be called poetry?

He goes on to say, "It (poetry) can for the sake of argument be simple, sensuous and passionate, *and* (his italics) meaningless. A poet is not precluded from attempting to convey anything other than *thought*." Which means, one may suppose, that a poet is entitled to express mental impressions that have no inter connection and no sequence of idea. Otherwise what does it mean? and in any case if impressions are conveyed there is meaning to that extent, if not why call it poetry?

For a writer to be purposely obscure is an unforgivable fault; it would be egotistical arrogance for a poet to employ language with the object of mystifying his readers. If he wishes to do that he had better invent crossword puzzles. It may be that his subject matter is abstruse and difficult to follow, but that does not necessarily mean that his language is not clear; if a man clearly understands what he is talking about he will be able to clearly express himself in words that are understandable.

Donne, who is referred to in the article, and others of his time, deliberately affected on occasion a far-fetched style which became fashionable; using in the quest for novelty symbols too unreal, metaphor too involved. The result became often tedious, the poetry being sacrificed to the manner; but at least these metaphysical poets wrote poetry which is more than can be said of some of their successors of to-day. I think one can find justification for saying that the craze for originality at all costs is responsible for much that is being put forward in the name of poetry at the present time, and of course this criticism applies to all the arts in the varying forms in which the craze manifests itself.

There is no need to labour here the charge of obscurity against present-day writers; Mr. Rook frankly admits it in the case of "much

modern writing," to which may often fairly be added the word meaningless.

Obscurity is the stock in trade of many writers of verse; indeed some would have little chance of seeing their work printed in its absence, it being the principal claim to notice.

It is noteworthy that obscurity is a failing seldom found in any of the great poets; references to little known persons and events there may be but usually the poet's meaning is not in doubt and when a poem is open to the charge of obscurity I venture to think that is nearly always because it is obscure and cannot be defended by attacking the reader.

Certain writers, poets or would-be poets, are fond of referring to the "ordinary reader" or the "lay reader." Says Mr. Rook: "It is for example very much easier for the 'ordinary man' to talk about apples than about truth." Of course it is; it also is much easier for a poet to do likewise; I will even venture to say that a poet is not necessarily a philosopher. In so far as poets do differ from non-poets is to be found in their capacity for making poetry. When that has been accomplished the written word is open to interpretation not only by poets but by all with an understanding of language, though when the meaning is ambiguous the writer has naturally the right to say which of the meanings he intends, though not the right, as has been claimed at times, of asserting a meaning altogether fantastic and arbitrary and in no way related to the written word, as though it were enough to say (as it has been said) "I wrote it and say this is the meaning no matter what the words imply or fail to imply."

This is not intended to do away with Mr. Rook's contention that failure of the reader to understand an abstruse subject cannot be blamed on the writer.

But the dissatisfaction with some modern writing does not arise only because of its obscurity; a good deal of it simply is not poetry and those people who reject it are unwilling to accept it as a substitute. It may and often does express beautiful sentiments and images but these alone do not constitute poetry. It is really quite wrong to talk of a "prose" poem, as is often done, just as though fine prose at a certain stage became poetry. Fine prose becomes the worse, not the better by any approach to the poetic form.

Poetry is a particular method of mental expression. By reason of its unique technique it is peculiarly suited to deal with the higher intellectual emotions and to afford wide scope to the imagination and it is with these that poetry is mostly concerned. If a prose writer chooses to employ himself with similar themes that will not change his prose to poetry, neither will the mere technique produce poetry but it is essential and its absence seems to cause a lack of clarity, conciseness and intellectual satisfaction. It is an old objection now, but it seems just as true to-day as yesterday to say that much writing labelled free verse savours more of prose than of poetry. It is largely a hybrid thing

wanting in those pleasing qualities that are the charm of poetry. Imagine Gray's *Elegy* without the rhythm and of course in this case the rhyme, not to speak of the metre. Try and treat the same subject in free verse. Even if it were not made up of disjointed phrases, probably quite startling but hung together any how or no how and with metre haphazard that might just as well be something else, typical of a good deal written to day; even under the best conditions and putting the foregoing remarks aside how near would you get to the quality of the *Elegy* itself.

This is not an argument in favour of reverting to the old forms of versification but rather a protest maintaining that if you throw the entire framework away you cannot go on making poetry, which has always through the changing centuries had a language of its own and it does not seem that it can be dispensed with.

There is another remark of Mr. Rook's which I do not like: "Donne demands of his readers (as he has a perfect right to do if he chooses) greater powers of attention before the meaning of his poetry can be clearly grasped." I am inclined to fall out with Mr. Rook over this. If he had said the poetry of its nature demands it, well and good; but he seems to make it a personal matter on the part of Donne himself. Perhaps, however, I have misunderstood him about this, in which case what I have already said applies here; but frankly I am a heretic in this matter of the divine rights of poets, the more so perhaps because some of the minor verse makers are inclined to demand rather more of these rights than the occasion calls for.

It will be interesting to see what will be the outcome of the present genuine and serious endeavours to find appropriate expression for poetic instincts. Are we inevitably fated to see a lowering of the highest quality in verse in common with the loss of so much else under the levelling pressure of the time?

Lynford, Thetford. RAYMUND BOURNE.

CAPTAIN ALAN ROOK replies: I have been very interested to read Mr. Raymund Bourne's criticism of my article on obscurity in poetry. Largely speaking Mr. Bourne and I appear at one, though I fear our opinions diverge on the subject of symbolical writing. Mr. Bourne, quite correctly, deduces from my article that there is no reason why poetry should not be nonsense (i.e. have no meaning), and asks whether meaningless words can be called poetry. It is here, I feel, that we are least in agreement, Mr. Bourne and I, and the fault lies with me because in the interests of brevity I did not enlarge so much as perhaps I should have done on this crucial point. May I be allowed to do so now?

Words have, it appears to me, two main functions. Firstly, they convey a meaning,—a meaning which may be found in the dictionary, and is open to all. Secondly, they embody a whole world of association which has gradually grown up around them, and which derives partly

from group experience (this is common to all members of the group), and partly from individual experience, which varies as between individuals, and is private to the individual. For example, the word *cold* has a dictionary meaning which we all know. It has also a power of suggestion born of its entailed associations, some of which is common to humanity, some which varies as between individuals. For myself the word carries associations, amongst others, with discomfort (a group experience), unkindness (probably a sub-group experience shared by those familiar with Shakespeare), the touch of bicycle handlebars which have no handgrips, the reflection of stone floors in unheated halls (both individual and therefore private associations), and so on. For you, Mr. Editor, the word will have other associations, like in general but differing in the particular. When each of us hears this word spoken, whilst we can say that in general we understand the same meaning, we cannot say we understand *exactly* the same in particular, since the impression of this word on our consciousness will have called up associations which, in so far as they are born of different individual experience, diverge. And can we doubt that there is an even more marked divergence in the impressions created in the minds of two hearers, one, say, born and bred in Singapore and the other in Archangel?

The interesting thing about all this is that the more imaginatively we use words, the more we emphasize the association-content at the expense of the meaning. And poetry frequently contains highly imaginative language. For instance, let us take the sentence, *The wind is cold.*

Here we have a factual statement expressed in language at a low imaginative level. The meaning is clear to us all, and we should all paraphrase it in very similar terms. But let us alter the emphasis of the sentence a little, and write *Cold is the wind* and we have taken the first step towards imaginative writing. For the emphasis is now fallen upon the word " cold," which immediately comes to life and begins the process of collecting around it the world of associations of which we have spoken, associations which are in general common property, but in particular based on individual experience. In other words, the balance of the two functions of the word has shifted in favour of impression, and the *meaning* of the sentence has become less exact, since it now conveys to each of us, in however little, a slightly different impression. Or, to put it yet another way, the sentence as re-written produces in each one of us a slightly different state, which was my meaning when I stated in my article that the aim of the French symbolists was to produce in the minds of their readers a *state*, rather than to convey a *meaning*.

If this be true, then it should be possible to find in poetry examples where the two functions of words are to the greatest possible degree divorced, and words are used either highly imaginatively to create an impression, or unimaginatively to convey meaning. Without treading

unnecessarily contentious ground, I will content myself with a pedestrian illustration taken from Shakespeare :

> . . . *The multitudinous sea incarnadine,*
> *Making the green one red.*

I knew these lines, Mr. Editor, many years before I was sufficiently the scholar to understand the meaning of the second and fourth words of the quotation. And because the lines were long familiar, it was many years after I had acquired a little Latin before I realized that the two lines were synonymous. So that even into the years of discretion I enjoyed the privilege of receiving, without complication, impression from the first line and meaning from the second. I maintain that, whatever the intention of the poet may have been, the effect of the first line is, generally, to convey to the mind of the reader a sense of mystery and vastness, and awe, and of the second to add meaning. And, be it noted, for the point is important, the effect of the first line was exactly the same when, for me, its meaning was quite unintelligible.

Now are we to say, as Mr. Bourne suggests, that at least until I reached the age of sixteen, only the second line was poetic ? When Keats wrote

> The same that oft-times hath
> Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, and fairy lands forlorn

to what extent do his words function to convey meaning, and to what extent a sense of enchantment ? If meaning was his primary aim, then almost any scientist is the better poet. If enchantment was, even partially, achieved, then we have admitted the dual function of words.

I do not wish Mr. Bourne to believe that I am a champion of obscurity. In my article I tried to show when obscurity was permissible in poetry, and when a fault, and I have been careful in this letter to select illustrations in which the meaning is plain. For where I suspect Mr. Bourne and I to disagree is in the extent of our willingness to permit to the poet the right of exploiting the secondary function of words to the exclusion (or almost so) of meaning, in an attempt to convey to the reader through association an emotional state, rather than through meaning an intellectual concept. Such poetry can only be finally judged by whether it succeeds in giving pleasure, and this it can seldom do if the reader approaches it with a heart full of prejudice and doubt. My knowledge of the works of Mallarmé and Rimbaud forces me to concede theirs as a legitimate poetic activity, and I would ask that at least this poetry may not be condemned on the grounds that its meaning is in doubt. As I pointed out before, such poems are often, intellectually, intentionally incomprehensible.

For the rest, for the large body of verse which apes the tricks without the effectiveness of the Symbolists, I offer neither justification nor excuse, save that in every age, and in every human activity many are called though few are chosen. We shall always have our poets and

our rhymsters. Mr. Bourne would not have it otherwise, for there's many a moment of delight hidden amongst a deal of nonsense.

### What is a Poem?

This letter was suggested by the article "A Poet and War," which appeared in a recent number of The Poetry Review. It carries this a little further to ask "What is a poem?"

My own feeling is that a poem must be an event—not an account. It must be the thing itself, not a mere transcription of it; something presented as an experience, complete or otherwise, or else as an object. It must be a stone flung directly into the sea of human awareness; circles of associations will spread round—but, incidental to it, effect not cause. These circles are the evocation, the train of ideas stirred in the reader by the poem. As Schiller says, "things make a greater impression themselves than what is felt or thought in regard to them. This is the basis of naïve art."

That is why it is so difficult to judge a poem without bias. The stone inevitably stirs circles of thought; these circles are part of the reader, not directly of the poem. So many writers tend to evoke several emotions at once, diffusing their energy and the reader's, throwing as it were a handful of tiny pebbles instead of a single stone. An effect can be gained by so doing, but it must necessarily be a less pure and less telling effect, because it loses both in simplicity and forcefulness. The failure is in the conception and for this no amount of virtuosity in style and choice of language can atone.

R. J. Shahani makes some surprising statements in his "Contemporary Poetry." One extraordinary piece of classification is the reference, in the same breath, to MacNeice and Dylan Thomas—two poets who seem to me to have very little indeed in common. Mr. Shahani says, "MacNeice's 'Plant and Phantom' is . . . an apotheosis of bardic sterility. Not a verse that catches fire. Not a line that glows like a ruby. Plenty of heartiness, which, somehow, rings false." I am immediately suspicious of people who fling about terms like "bardic sterility"—outdated poeticisms, if not stale fish. May I suggest that your contributor should read "Meeting Point," "A Toast," "The Coming of War," or "Cradle Song," and reconsider his position. Personally, I would rank MacNeice first among the "Big Four" of the '30's. The lines, from an earlier poem entitled "Epilogue,"

> . . . the gulls, who weave a free
> quilt of rhythm on the sea,"

are an example of the single stone. This is an experience. It may not appeal to all as it does to me, and it is of course in a sense a limited experience—none the less it is one.

I agree with Mr. Shahani's praise of Ruth Pitter. At times the beautiful, sensuous wording and imagery of Spender diffuses itself through arousing too great a complexity of emotions—but the further

poeticism applied to him, " he wears the singing-robe with conscious dignity, if not with native grace," seems singularly ill-merited. Even less happy is the epithet " cheap " as applied to the work in verse of Herbert Read.

Jordans, February 12th. MARGUERITE EDGELOW.

### ANOTHER CRITICISM OF MR. SHAHANI

One reader at least found the article on Recent Poetry and Drama by Ranjee G. Shahani in the last POETRY REVIEW provocative of a little irritated amusement, as well as of much genuine interest. It is quickly effective to describe Mr. Auden as " pantingly, breathlessly contemporary," but to anyone who has appreciated the static contentment of—for instance—" This lunar beauty," the final reaction to that criticism is annoyance at the exhibition of the very same quality, but in the author of the article, not in his victim.

And again, Mr. Louis MacNeice is by no means always cryptic. To blanket him with the word " heartiness " seems to point to a muffled kind of thinking. He strikes one rather as of those rare poets from whose works can be taken a line here—a line there—and a most delectable enjoyment provided by the perfect balance of his rhythmic perception. For instance in the line " like the dazzle on the sea my darling " ; and " of living like a fugue and moving " (On leaving Barra), there is surely a grasp and control of two different kinds of movement which is unusually satisfying.

One is reduced in the end to a sad little question ; not—" are there any great writers ? " But—" are there many careful readers ? " Pity the poets !

Bognor Regis, February 10th. D. J. CUTTS.

### THE GENESIS OF POETRY

Apropos recent statements on the genesis of poetry and the working of the poet's mind, I suggest that Life should be ordered by inspired impulses—they spring from intuition. By following them logically as they arise, the mind falls into harmony, a whole and complete union of experience.

The mind of a great poet has that unity. Each experience finds its own place within the whole. Poems are written not embodying a single experience but with the whole life as background, giving one event for the moment unique importance, concentrating all energy upon it so that it stands out in high relief, and afterwards it falls into its own place where it will play an allotted part, according to its importance, in raising the life to the highest possibility.

A poet who is not possessed by true genius, takes each experience as it comes, and rapturously builds his poem around it, then lets it slip, a hard and concrete fact instead of pliable recognition, into the recesses of his mind. Occasionally the impulse to write will be so great, and the emotions so aroused that they will sweep his conscious

and subconscious mind to temporary unity, and there will be produced a perfect poem. It sometimes happens that such an impulse is born—it is rarely achieved again—and only the greatest emotional experience can produce a masterpiece.

The genius, in the main, produces entirely pure poetry. The main body of his work is good, and he produces many poems of supreme excellence. His realizations and perceptions, being already bound together, his impulses and emotions will lift him more smoothly into the heights ; his mind becoming the perfect vehicle for the expression of his life, and his life itself is in continued progression, leaping with inspiration and perception.

Always there is beside him, another self, as it were a silent, impassive, almost imperceptible spectator, recording smoothly, barely within consciousness, every emotion and experience. The value of experience is relative to this power of observation, this sensitiveness deep within. In such a way material for future work is always at hand.

Experiences of sufficient intensity to make the event vivid and unforgettable are left isolated, hidden, still within the unity of the mind to develop in secret. At length, providing circumstances are favourable, and the conditions for growth sufficient, development is completed and poetry flows forth. The ability of the writer to control the presentation of his experience is termed "style." Style should be cultivated in as much as it aids the perfect presentation of experience in whatever form it is made. The merely talented artist aims merely for perfection of style. He does not comprehend that without the sensitiveness by which comes inspiration, and progressive ability to perceive the truth within that which is revealed to him, there is nothing expressed which is worth expressing.

Yet the genius may also produce bad poetry. His unity is constantly being adjusted, new experiences are continually being added and the whole tension is held by an effort of will. Sometimes the will fails, and tension slips ; then it is that his works lose their greatness, until once more he is master of his mind.

This then is poetic genius—the perfect impression of experience upon a mind, inspired and progressive yet completely controlled.

Accrington, February 18th, 1942. MILDRED GLOVER.

## W. W. GIBSON AS "WAR-POET"

I wish that writers on contemporary poets would strive to be a little more accurate, especially where their hasty paragraphs are likely to contradict current works of criticism. For instance, Mr. Edmund Casson in his article on Wilfrid Gibson in your winter issue says, "he certainly published his first book in Kendal." This, however, is not "certainly," for *Urlyn the Harper* (he has spelt it wrongly) was published by Elkin Matthews at Vigo Street, London. (The book is at my elbow.) Mr. Casson also says, "His own war-poems come from

actuality. He steps straight from Deadwater and Bloody Syke to No Man's Land, and in the mud and mire of Flanders. . . ." But this has been contradicted by both Robert Graves and me in recent issues to *The Listener*. Gibson's war poems, like my own, are civilian war poems, and express nothing of personal experience on the actual battlefield. It was not out of either spitefulness or ignorance that I omitted Mr. Gibson from the chapter on war-poetry in my recent book of historical criticism *Post-Victorian Poetry* (Dent, 1938), but simply because he did not fit into the picture. The patriots and early war-bards came first, and after them the disillusioned poets of the actual battlefields—among whom are included Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Edward Thompson and Richard Aldington. Even apart from Mr. Gibson's own private confession it is sufficiently known that he does not fit into the second group, and from his public confession in the *Listener* of November 13th, 1941, that he does not fit into the first: "Since Mr. Spender has erroneously, and, I trust, inadvertently, included my name among those of the poets who hailed the outbreak of the last war with enthusiasm, may I be permitted to explain that my long-forgotten little book of rhymes, *Battle*, was in its implications anti-war." And as I think that Mr. Gibson has not really changed his attitude I would suggest that the criticism of his new book *The Alert* in a footnote is likely to give a wrong impression.

St. Albans, Feb. 5th, 1942. HERBERT PALMER.

## U.S.A. VERSE PUBLICATIONS

It becomes increasingly apparent that Kunigunde Duncan is a conclusion-drawer rather than a fact-finder. Her "kindness" in not mentioning my name in her first article is subject to debate, and that I "needn't have answered—unless I felt guilty" is, if Miss Duncan could do a little thinking, no more convincing than I needn't have answered unless I felt innocent.

It is true, as she says, that the racket-anthologies are not circulated outside the contributors, but since all of my anthologies are regularly sold to bookstores and libraries, it must be evident that mine cannot fall into the category she placed them, even though she didn't mention my name. "He merely denies without proving his statement," she writes, but to deny is sufficient cause for Miss Duncan to prove hers. She can state from now until doomsday that the "Woman's Home Companion" sponsored Ted Malone, but such was never the case. When she admits that her "error was as to name, not situation," she is begging the question regarding the situation.

Miss Duncan may have studied arithmetic when she was a child, as she says, and I do not doubt that because her arithmetic is still childish. I know of only three racket-anthology publishers who make money; luckily, the Federal Trade Commission has clamped down on two of them for misleading wording, and they now have to watch their step, which means that they will not do so well in the future though

it is not likely that bad writers will hesitate to see their work in print.

It seems to me that a publication of your character should require its writers who want to damn all over the place to produce irrefutable proof. You yourself mention that Miss Duncan should not classify THE POETRY REVIEW as an "all verse magazine." For that matter, neither are the following which she lists: *American Poetry Magazine*, *Blue Moon*, *Driftwind*, *Fantasy*, *The Galleon*, *Kaleidograph*, *Lantern*, *Lyric*, *Poet Lore*, *Poetry*, *Poetry Caravan*, *Poetry World*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Prairie Wings*, *Spirit*, *The Step Ladder*, *Verse Craft*, and *Voices*.

Miss Duncan likewise includes in her list several magazines which are dead, some of them for many years, and the addresses she lists for some of the magazines is too much for words.

Miss Duncan mentions that the "New York World's Fair folk got out an atrocity both years," but again, as ever, she's wrong. The Exposition Press got out the World's Fair Anthology of Verse for two years; it had no connection with the World's Fair, which tried, unsuccessfully, to stop the publisher from using the name.

HENRY HARRISON.

Poetry Publisher, New York.

MORDANT YOUTH.

Christmas Humphreys deplores the sorrow that drips in well-rounded phrases from youthful pens. And who am I to say that he is wrong? Nevertheless, quite apart from the Times We Live In, pathos is best expressed in poetry, whether real or imaginary, while happy poems usually turn out to be "merely verse"—at least, according to the Critics and, again, who am I to say they might be wrong?

For Mr. Humphreys' survey, however, I append a modest verse of my own which, while expressing all the unappeased longing of a poet, yet admits that life has its lighter moments:

My heart is a passionate peanut,
Withering sere in its skin,
Like a calyx-cup that is lifted up
In a mock of original sin.
For the heart's hot rapture is wasted
In a furtive affair back-stairs,
Like an apple that Eve never tasted
Or Adam choked on in his prayers.
So I go, unelate, injudicious,
Through the spring and the down-thudding nuts,
Though my circles grow daily more vicious
With ifs and ingenuous buts.
(Still, my peanut, though sere, has its moments
And the half-open door never shuts!)

London, N.W.5, December 9th. JOYCE ROWE.

*THE POETS' FELLOWSHIP:*

## THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

The standard has been remarkably high. Very few contributors have sent in work quite unworthy of commendation. Very subtle and delicate poetry has been sent by E. RADCLIFFE BINNINGTON, but "The Matador" and "Polish Soldier" cannot be fully appreciated without a study of the rhythms of foreign languages in comparison with the English. None the less, they are both good poems from the purely English point of view.

IËRNE ORMSBY sends in a Sonnet which is a fine tribute to Russia.

EILEEN RADCLIFFE DIX has some beautiful lines in "Exiled." Our Premium winners are therefore:—E. RADCLIFFE BINNINGTON, Louth; EILEEN RADCLIFFE DIX, Beaconsfield; IËRNE ORMSBY, Thurgoland. Amongst those "Highly Commended" especial mention must be made of VERE ARNOT, ELLODË COLLINS and W. R. LATHAM.

### HIGHLY COMMENDED

R. A. Akhurst, Manchester;
Vere Arnot, Walton-on-Thames;
T. E. Casson, Ulverston;
Ellodë Collins, Bournemouth;
Pauline Emeric, Taplow;
Mary English, Cobham;
W. R. Latham, Chingford;
P. E. Leaver, Kelvedon;
Joyce M. Lloyd, Hassocks;
Chloris Heaton Ross, Berkhamsted;
Harry Sefton, Lytham;
Roberta Shuttleworth, Guildford;
Brenda F. Skene, Lustleigh;
Muriel Symmons, Salcombe;
F. Lucas Thompson, Kingston-on-Thames.

### COMMENDED

W. S. Barnard, Beckenham;
Elizabeth Barrett, Seaford;
Dorothy Birch, Bournemouth;
Dennis Birch, Fareham;
Alice E. Collinge, Harwood;
Dorothy Rosetta Colls, Chorley Wood;
Marjorie Craig, Malvern;
Marguerite Evans, Pontypridd;
Evelyn M. Finn, Honiton;
Mary Gordon, Kingston Hill;
I. Sutherland Groom, Carlisle;
W. Help, Wellington;
Gladys Hunkin, St. Ives;
Elizabeth Kentish, Westerham;
A. Lovell, Northfleet;
Phyllis Lyth, York;
John Lyth, York;
A.M., Cheltenham;
G. E. Merrick, Warminster;
Enid M. Norman, Weston-super-Mare;
G. S. Oddy, Ryde;
Edith Franklin Parker, Wootton-Bassett;
Juanita Peirse, Bath;
George Price, Hoylake;
Derek B. Reade, Tettenhall;
E. Seton, Greenwich;
Hilda M. Slade, Worthing;
Arthur Lynnford-Smith, Wanstead;
E. M. Storr, Exmouth;
Dorothy Trail, Vancouver, B.C.;
Edith M. Walker, Bournemouth;
Phyllis Dulce Warwick, Newark.

From a batch of poems by Ernest Charles Ryman aged seventeen years, now passing his last year at Edmonton County School in preparation for a university course—all incredible as from a lad, nearly all good of their kind, both thoughtful and imaginative, the rhythm holding them together beautifully. The two following are good samples of a type that has now become familiar.

## DEATH

BLOOD trickles
From the gaping flesh.
It is warm
Like the sun.
It is wet
Like a lake at sunset.
I am tired,
That is why I am lying
Quite still.
The whining shells
Seem softer—
Music for my weary head.
The blood still flows,
So does the stream
That runs past my home.
I shall go back there soon,
But now—
I must rest.

## SUCCESS

I HAVE seen them
In their comfort,
And their undisturbed security;
I have watched them
At their banquets
In their warm and soft serenity.
Yes! Often I have seen them,
And I find I like them not.

They are the successful men
Who mingle with their kind
In huge, conceited halls,
Where self-assurance
Drips from every smile,
And clean, white collars
Cling to neat, pink skin.
Yes! Often I have seen them,
And I find I love them not.

In the streets
They pass misfortune by,
And with an unseeing eye
They look on tragedy.
They are but blinded fools
To whom all pathos
Is denied—
For have they looked
Upon the thin pale face of hunger?
Or have they once beheld
The melancholy eyes of disappointment?
Yes, I know, I hate them,
And my hate is strong—
With the strength of a waterfall!

ERNEST CHARLES RYMAN.

RHODA E. CUTBUSH contributes "A PREFACE TO THE WORK OF AN UNKNOWN POET":

If curious eyes on this bewildering book
Should chance to fall, I've seen to it they look

In vain for any helpful evidence
To teach biographers to publish sense.
I've used no lines but those that can escape
The damning witness of the measuring tape;
My words are trained to leap away like deer
If movements of deduction they should hear;
Near haunts where I have wept false trails I've laid,
And where I've laughed and loved are mist and shade;
I've carefully devised that none may know
From what black rock the bitter waters flow,
Nor ever learn beneath what secret curse
I once was born that made me take to verse.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS replies to Mrs. L. M. Miller of Bangor who wrote a reply to his poem "To Youthful Poets in Love with Death."

If life is but the lovelier name for Death
And each upon the first and latest breath
Assumes the other's seeming, there must be
A Third of three, by semblance unconfined,
The perfume of the Uncreated Mind,
A Namelessness, of Life and Death set free.

And we, the eternal pilgrims of the Way
That move from life to life, as living day
Wakes from the tomb of night, view from afar
With shining and inviolable eyes
The heart's enlightenment until, new wise
We slow become what now unknown we are.

PHYLLIS LYTH in YOU SLEEP, MY FRIEND, replies to the criticism in verse of her "None Wake You":

You sleep, my friend, who shared not their delusion,
They who complain
That Death's a cheat, a liar, an illusion,
And call for Life, their broken toy, again.

You, my beloved, still kept faith with Reason,
And meeting Death
Cried not in dull conceit that it was treason
To stop for evermore your humble breath.

You needed not the hope of lives hereafter,
Reward nor prize;
Your Kingdom was the bravery of laughter
And courage and clear eyes.

You asked no coward second chance to finish
Your plans begun,
Knowing that trusty Death would not diminish
The fruits of work well done.

All lovely things that face the Truth unshaking
Were yours to keep;
I hold them close and ask for no awaking
When I have joined your sleep.

### An Appreciation of "The Vestal Fire"

Do you know the atmosphere of Ireland—the faint mist of melancholy which, even on the brightest days, wraps its rugged cliffs and mountains and distinguishes them from their Celtic half-brothers—the highlands of Scotland? There is in it a blending of passion and compassion, an essence of idealization, which softens the "gaunt rocks" and encircles the blue hills, tawny bogs, and green pastures in a girdle of romance.

These qualities have had their influence upon the Irish character. They are all apparent in this exquisite poem—or series of poems—by Patrick MacDonogh, in which he describes, in beautiful language and imagery, the search for love's perfection—*The Vestal Fire* (Dublin: Orwell Press)—lit only by the divine spark from another soul.

The attainment of this ideal may be given to few; but some have followed "the road that runs blind until a stride unlocks broad seas," and known the consequent enrichment, together with the widening of outlook when "the love of one proceeds to universal love," for "the human heart must find room for its own divine immensity."

It is through this progression that the poem carries us, on the wings of "great swans" and "thoughts in flight." What a wealth of thought, insight, imagination and sympathy is compressed into its various stanzas! Here is no obscurantism, but a sincerity that "looks for what is beneath whatever seems." There is strength beneath its gentleness, and courage, courage to face life and the inexorable fact of the loneliness of mortal existence—"the saddest of all human hopes—that loneliness has ended"; courage to face heartbreak, "after the heart remains the unbroken will"; courage to face even his "own soul, where all is known."

This poet has the true artist's awareness and perception. He can take the most ordinary aspects of nature and etch them indelibly upon the mind by the freshness of their presentation. His sure draughtsmanship is obvious in every picture, whose "line is lasting beauty." He has most effectively handled "the round and tapering brush" to paint "the antlered shadows of the woods" where "pines are gates to darkness". His colour varies from the cold medium of moonlight to the glow of the vestal fire itself. And the whole is

touched with that native melancholy, tender "as snowflake upon snow."

I could quote from this poem indefinitely, but its intrinsic beauty cannot be conveyed except in its entirety. In closing this little book we are left with a lingering enchantment, and though Mr. MacDonogh may believe that "none perceives the truth of his own giving," those who appreciate his, may well wish their vision were as rich, and their skill in delineation as rare.—L. M. MILLER.

## ON GOING BLIND

GOODNIGHT, my eyes. My weary eyes, goodnight.
It is a strange foretaste of death,
This fading of your light.
My very breath
Seemed no more living part of me than you, my sight.

The darkness deepens slowly in my heart
As you bring less of day to me,
Dear sense whose golden art
Once set me free
From those night flowering fears that, when day comes, depart.

Drowned in darkness on sleepless nights, my eyes
Would seek the window's paler square
To watch stars slowly rise
Or dawn grow fair.
Both sun and stars now set forever in my skies.

"Take all but sight," I pray, and feel my mind
Trouble with hope for loss of touch
And sound and taste. I find
I ask too much:
Still do I hear and taste and feel, still I grow blind.

Dead thought and darkness soon can work their will.
Eating as acid eats through bone
They shall destroy me still
When I alone
Walk in my endless night. Dim eyes, look now your fill.

Arlington, Virginia. CATHERINE RIDGELY.

Title page and Index, Vol. 32, will be published with the May issue of THE POETRY REVIEW.

## A "Poetry Workshop"

Mr. Ralph Dighton Jackson, Boston, Massachusetts, sends the following interesting extract from the *Christian Science Monitor*, adding "We are all very proud of your courage and faith. You are setting an example for all the world."

Workshops, where artisans may find an outlet for latent talent, are quite in the order of the day, but comes now one for poets.

Would-be makers of verse find "welcome" on the doormat of the early Boston home of Miss Ralph D. Jackson, on Rover Street.

Known to be standing in 1807, when the Charles flowed past its doors, the interior of the house has been little changed. Huge beams and rafters, winding stairs, and spacious rooms tell of another era. In the studio upstairs members of the Workshop sit around a refectory table in a room whose antique-appearing furniture was designed and built by Miss Jackson and her architect father.

Miss Jackson is young and enthusiastic, with the right temperament to lead a crusade against what she calls the present "jerry-built" poetry. She graduated cum laude in English Literature in 1939 from Radcliffe, and while still in college edited two anthologies of undergraduate work, including some of her own poems.

Upon leaving college she wished to continue the study of English verse, but could find no course that appealed to her, so she evolved one of her own, and became so deeply imbued with it that she wanted to share it with others seeking the same goal. So why not a Workshop for Poetry!

Besides, this Workshop can go hand in hand with The Poetry Society of England, established in 1909 and with centres throughout the English-speaking world. Her Workshop is open to those who belong to the Boston Poetry Centre, while others may attend by paying 25 cents, which contribution is sent to The Poetry Society in London. "Our aim is threefold," Miss Jackson explains. "First we must know technique; second we must recognize the soul of poetry, and third we must practise."

## Poetry in Our Day

Mr. Cecil Day Lewis was this year's Yeats memorial lecturer, at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. He recalled the writing of his earliest poems at the age of six in a rectory garden in County Wexford. Both his parents and himself were born in Ireland, and he is a descendant of Oliver Goldsmith—"sufficiently Irish," he said, "to be proud of the title of poet."

Dealing with the period of the early 1930's, he said that there had been a lot of to-do about propaganda poetry. A number of poets who emerged about that time, and became associated with left-wing politics, were hailed from both sides as prophets and white hopes—or

red hopes—of civilization, or as revolutionary doggerel mongers and traitors to the cause of poetry.

The poets of the 1930's lacked a literary tradition and a scheme of moral values. The work of the Georgians seemed like self-abuse in punts up shady backwaters, and there was a stuffy, ingrowing, too-personal atmosphere about their literature. It was almost inevitable that poets should have turned to Socialism.

The poets of the 1930's possessed a confidence born of faith; they believed that the values of modern civilization were ugly, but they saw in its material manifestations a kind of beauty. They saw beauty in towns, factories, aeroplanes . . . because their faith enabled them to see these things in the light of what they *could* mean in happiness.

Also, they set out to handle in poetry a number of the phenomena of the modern age which had previously been left untouched, phenomena which had become familiar to the ordinary man and had taken their places in the pattern of his sense-data.

The poets of the period under consideration broke new ground, not only in the province of things, but in the realm of ideas—not necessarily political ideas. Freud, and psychoanalysis in general, had inevitably influenced the poets. They provided material for a new mythology, and fresh illumination of the sources of poetry.

The work of the surrealists had carried introversism as far as it would go. Surrealism was not a matter of exploring your own chaos, but of sitting tight and letting your chaos come to you. Modified forms of it represented the reactions of younger writers to the 1930's school. The last few years had produced a change in the poetic idiom. It was more inspirational, less social conscious, didactic and satiric. Its influence could be traced directly to Blake. . . .

When a poet was writing a poem, Mr. Day Lewis said, and quite often after he had written it, he didn't care if anyone read it or not. There was nothing purer, nothing more solitary, than the joy of creation. But the motive for the creative act was something other than that joy. . . .

The reason that poetry to-day had so small a public was because people were neither simple nor civilized enough to respond to it.

War-time conditions have delayed the publication of recent issues of THE POETRY REVIEW, culminating in the printers of this periodical for almost twenty years having to suspend operations. In consequence various reviews and other matter intended for this number have had to be held over and unused standing matter drawn on, with the result that the balance of contents has been upset. But we trust this number will be found the " good shillingsworth " Mr. James Agate (in the *Daily Express*) declared the previous issue to be, and we hope that with the present difficulties surmounted and an assured paper supply we may be able to stabilize publication and reap the advantage of the gradually growing interest and recognition now forthcoming.

## WAR SONNET

WHEN, in the quiet stolen night of time,
One summer evening long before June died
I told how War might turn me from my goal
And all my work seem but a worthless rhyme,
Your eyes shone with a gleam of lover's pride
And while I thought you cared I bared my soul.
Death could not walk where our life's dreams began ;
Where you were wife and I was married man.

Yet, Death stalked past our trysting wall, and we,
Both unaware, stood only for the kiss :
We did not care, we did not even see
The world's new agony but we shall miss
Each other most when Peace with silent pain
Comes sweeping down a greener English lane.

Trooper, R.A.C. JOHN T. KIRK.

## THE MAGIC WEST

THE jewelled sunsets of the western skies
Are mingling amethyst with ruby red.
Except the sea birds' sad and plaintive cries,
The air is silent as the sleeping dead.
The wind has disappeared in weariness,
Tired out by blowing through the long hot day ;
Each wave it conjured with a soft caress,
And blew it gently dancing on its way.
How lovely, is the magic of these skies,
Their hazy colours melting into mist :
The glorious setting sun that never dies
Until all earthly creatures have been kiss'd.
And so to bid them all farewell to-night,
Fain would I linger in this haunting sight.

MAIRI STEWART.

MRS. M. JOHANSEN DEANE (Swindon) : It behoves us all to make an effort to keep the lamp of culture—particularly of its highest expression, poetry—alight. The Poetry Society has come triumphantly through 1941 " blitz " and all. Let us hope that whatever dark times may lie ahead of us, it will be able to continue its valuable work.